



**Department of
Education**

Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Brooklyn Community Arts and Media

High School K412

**300 Willoughby Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11205**

Principal: James O'Brien

**Date of review: May 5, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Jo Ann Benoit**

The School Context

Brooklyn Community Arts and Media is high school with 404 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 79% Black, 18% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Asian students and 1 % other. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 84.3%.

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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based professional collaborations during which they analyze student work and teacher data and play an integral role in key decisions.

Impact

This practice of collaboration has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement and teacher effectiveness, as well as teachers participating in distributive leadership structures that allow them to affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers meet in department and grade meetings, in professional development PODs and inter visitation committees to strengthen teacher practice and improve student achievement. During inter-visitations, teachers take notes for themselves as well as offer feedback to colleagues in documented reflections. There has been progress made in students' ability to write argumentative essays based on grade and class level assessments analyzed as well as in student attendance. Teacher practice has also improved as per Advance data. 75% of teachers have improved in 2 or more of the Danielson Framework for teaching domains.
- In grade team meetings, teachers talk about students (Kid Talk), their academic work as well as their socio-emotional development. Teachers' roles rotate in teacher meetings. They use the school's scope and sequence to plan vertically and horizontally. Teachers' focused attention on student achievement at weekly meetings has helped to bring about improvement in student academic achievement such as Regents' passing rates for math being 89% and for English 91%. The four year graduation rate has steadily increased from 65% in 2012 to 78% in 2014.
- Teachers lead professional development structures, afterschool activities, and committees. They have at least one full day of observation per year in which they visit their colleagues. They are accountable to turnkey information they receive outside of the building to their colleagues. They meet every day for the morning meeting with the administration to go over testing, announcements, celebrations, and other school business items. There is a very low teacher turn over at the school.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated belief about how students learn best. Teachers consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, but those entry points are not always strategically planned and limit student-to-student discussion.

Impact

Students are appropriately challenged and have opportunities to demonstrate higher order thinking and work that reflect high levels participation but not yet full ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- Teaching practices across classrooms reflect an articulated belief about how students learn best: classrooms are organized, the environment is structured and safe, there is an agenda displayed on the board, students use worksheets to help them with the work, they work collaboratively. Teachers have a good rapport with the students and offer them grade level work which is scaffolded and rigorous. For example, in a science class, student were measuring the contour of potatoes as a way to build schema for their lesson on topographic maps; in global history, students stated claims and provided evidence for why they agreed or disagreed with the U.S. on the atomic bomb drop on Japan.
- Across classrooms, students were engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrated higher order thinking skills. In an algebra class, students worked on factoring to find roots algebraically. They worked in groups, on the board, or individually to explain what they saw on the graphs they were working with, graph their answer, and then make connections between the binomials they multiplied and the graph that they drew.
- Teaching practices did not fully allow students to own their learning. Although students were engaged in standard based work, across classrooms, teachers dominated the class conversations, limiting student-to-student conversations. In two classes visited, the lessons' pace impeded on students' abilities to fully participate in discussions and produce meaningful work.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and staff ensure that the curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, content standards, and the instructional shifts across grades and subject areas. Rigorous habits and higher order tasks are emphasized in the curricula and embedded throughout the contents and grades and curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

The school's coherent decisions on refining curricula ensure that all students, across all grades and subject areas, have opportunities to engage in rigorous tasks that promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Administrators review at least four units a year for each teacher to ensure alignment to the overall curricula and coherence across grades and subject areas. The school uses common lesson and unit templates to plan and develop content. Teachers are required to submit detailed unit plans by adding lesson objectives and tasks to the plans. Units include differentiated learning activities for struggling students and for students who need to be challenged, and student self-assessments. Across the school teachers' focus on students putting forth a claim and supporting evidence as well as on the Framework for Teaching's components 1E, 3B, 3C and 3D in their PODs.
- Teachers follow the backwards design planning structure and use assessment to drive lesson development. Assessments are performance based and reflect the level of rigor found in the Regents exams. In the science department, consultants were brought in to support teachers in developing inquiry-based curricula. Students have a choice in the format they use to produce work. In one science project, students represented the life cycle of a rock through fairy tales and other genres. In a history class, they studied command economy and capitalism from a project in which they owned a bread company. Still in another class, students presented their findings on the Civil Rights' Movement through newspaper articles they created.
- Teachers have taken technology classes on Saturdays to help infuse technology (iMovie, smartboard, the internet) into their curricula to provide multiple entry points to students. In a 9th grade English class, the teacher added two supports to the end of unit tasks because students had a difficult time completing the task: the first graphic organizer included the components of an essay and a list of what is needed in each component, the second graphic organizer also included the components of an essay with more details and space on the chart for students to add their information.

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of on-going checks for understanding as well as student self- and peer assessments that provide teachers and students with actionable feedback and next steps.

Impact

The results of students' self- and peer assessments as well as other assessment practices allow teachers to adjust instruction and curricula to meet the needs of all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers create and use assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the school's curricula. There is evidence of actionable feedback to students throughout the subject areas. For example, the following are excerpts of feedback given to students in addition to the checks on the task rubrics: for a global history project on the French Revolution where students had to create a book for elementary students, the teacher wrote "Excellent job! You have a clear understanding of the causes and effects of the French Revolution. Your summaries are clear and simplistic and could definitely be understood by an elementary aged student"; for a science project on the reaction of Alka Seltzer, a teacher gave a student the following feedback: "Overall, your lab report was wonderfully expressed and written. There are few grammatical errors throughout the lab report. You demonstrate your understanding of the scientific principles in your hypothesis by applying prior knowledge on how temperature affects the ...energy of molecule...you should have talked more about the factors that affect the reaction rate of alka seltzer".
- Students spoke about having more opportunities to peer assess than self- assess but admitted that they preferred it that way because according to them, "it is more difficult to see your own errors". The school is piloting a template entitled the Honesty points to promote student self-assessment during lessons. The expectation is that it will be used school wide in the future.
- Teachers check for understanding with worksheets, exit slips, homework assessments and in other ways. In one classroom, while one teacher was teaching, the other was walking around to assign differentiated graphic organizers to students based on what was actually happening/had happened in the classroom. Those decisions made by the teacher circulating were based on students' levels of participation and passed data.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff members and provide differentiated support to staff so that they meet those expectations. In turn, the staff effectively communicates high expectations to students and families and provides students with focused support and guidance.

Impact

The communication of high expectations for all and the high level of support given to meet those expectations lead to a culture for learning and of mutual accountability and communication with families that enable student progress and preparation for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are given time in pods and in common planning to strengthen teacher practice. Meeting notes and agenda are submitted for approval and feedback which promote mutual accountability. New and untenured teachers have shown growth in at least six of the eight Danielson Framework for teaching components.
- The school communicates through phone calls, emails, Skedula, and the new parent coordinator with families. Families are regularly in the school for meetings with teachers and the parent teacher conferences, of which one has become a curriculum night. They receive eight report cards, four final and four midway in the semesters.
- Students spoke about the expectations they had to meet such as for attendance, giving work on time and wearing their uniform. They also spoke about students being recognized for meeting those expectations. They attend advisory during which they tackle topics such as “who am I?”, “How can I be an asset to my community?” and “what do I want in my future?” Students are offered rigorous work and opportunities to take courses that prepare them for the next level. Students are able to take Advanced Placement courses in three subject areas. They also take College Now courses with John Jay College. All English language learners passed all of the required Regents to graduate in June. The school has partnered with iMentor which provides a mentor for 11th and 12th graders until their first year out of high school.
- The support provided by school staff and partners have yielded many benefits. Student attendance has increased steadily since 2013. It went from 82% to 85% to date. In 2012, 35% of seniors applied to CUNY, in 2015, close to 100% of students did. Students had the opportunity to travel to Spain this year if they met set criteria around academics and attendance. The academic committee provides weekly updates on academic items, senior requirements, clubs and programs, discipline, athletics and other announcements.