



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Brooklyn International High School

K439

**49 Flatbush Avenue Extension
Brooklyn
NY 11201**

Principal, I.A.: Kathleen Rucker

**Date of review: November 20, 2014
Reviewer: Eva Ostrum**

The School Context

Brooklyn International is a high school with 343 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 18.4% Black, 22.2% Hispanic, 11.1% White, and 48.4% Asian students. The student body includes 82.50% English language learners and 1.7% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the 2013 – 2014 school year was 94%.

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	Focus	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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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	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	Celebration	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:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

The school establishes a culture for learning and high expectations, and communicates these expectations consistently to staff, students, and families. School leaders provide professional development and training so that all members of the school community can meet the established expectations.

Impact

School leaders, staff and families share mutual accountability for the culture of high expectations, resulting in teaching practice that consistently aligns with the Danielson Framework for Teaching and in student college readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is participating in the Progressive Redesign Opportunity for Schools of Excellence (PROSE) program. As part of the school's participation in the PROSE program, the school has implemented a teacher evaluation system that includes inter-visitations and the development of teacher portfolios. All teachers complete a portfolio aligned to the instructional foci and Danielson Framework for Teaching that includes goals, curricula reflections, curricula maps, inter-visitation reflections, and informal observations. Teachers share their portfolios with their colleagues as part of their ongoing professional dialogue. Common preparation periods also support new and developing teachers through facilitating their collaboration with colleagues in their certification areas across grades. The staff unanimously voted in favor of the PROSE initiative, and teachers spoke about the positive impact it has had on their professional growth.
- The teacher evaluation system that the school has implemented through PROSE includes two required inter-visitations per school year for every member of the staff. Teachers then write reflections on those inter-visitations for their portfolios. Approximately half of the staff chooses to engage in additional inter-visitations to further their own professional growth. The literacy coach visits teachers individually and then matches those whom she thinks will benefit from working together. Those pairs then go on to visit each other's classrooms throughout the year, with the literacy coach facilitating the collaboration to promote collegial and professional learning through the experience.
- The school's intensive college readiness focus engages students in college level work, prepares them to take full advantage of a college education, and promotes student ownership of the college preparation and application process. Students discussed their participation in College Now, a partnership program that allows them to earn college credit while still in high school. Students also stated that, as a result of what the school has taught them, they understand the requirements for placing out of remedial classes at the City University of New York (CUNY), and the cost (in terms of time and money) of having to take remedial classes.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Teachers consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills in a coherent way across grades and subject areas. Curricula tasks are planned and refined using student work data.

Impact

All students, including English language learners (ELL) and students with disabilities (SWD), have access in multiple ways to a rigorous, challenging, curriculum, and demonstrate their thinking in tasks aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards.

Supporting Evidence

- Every classroom prominently displays curricular supports that students can use as reference tools while working. For example, in an English classroom, large posters suggested "sentence starters" that students could use in the Socratic seminar they were conducting. In a health classroom, posters around the room laid out the elements of writing aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards that students could use in writing an essay on their laptops, such as, "I cite specific evidence," "I analyze information," "I determine central idea," "I use key terms and phrases".
- The school has developed curricular units and academic tasks that ensure access to rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all students, including those developing their English skills. For example, an English language arts unit includes plans for students to read *The Giver*, a text with an accessible lexile level, and then respond to writing prompts that push them to think critically and rigorously about complex issues. An assignment for a sample expository essay from the unit plan asks students to present both sides of an issue, supported with evidence from the text.
- The newcomer student population at the school has an acute need to focus on English language skills. The school has integrated rigorous instruction in English language skills across the curriculum. For example, in ninth and tenth grade math, the school is piloting a curriculum aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards called the Interactive Mathematics Curriculum® (IMP). IMP consistently employs the Common Core "Standards for Mathematical Practice." The IMP curriculum creates access for and supports students in developing their English skills by emphasizing writing about the mathematical process.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provided multiple entry points, scaffolds, and extensions that engaged all learners in appropriately challenging tasks. Students demonstrated high levels of thinking, participation, and ownership in their work products.

Impact

As a result of having access to appropriately challenging tasks, all learners demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products and assume ownership for their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers across the vast majority of classrooms provided multiple entry points, high-quality supports, and learning extensions so all learners had the opportunity to engage in the challenging tasks. For example, in preparation for a Socratic seminar in an English language arts class, the teacher used a film based on a book that students had already read to extend their understanding of the text. While screening the film, the teacher provided students with multiple opportunities to reflect through writing and discussion. For example, the teacher paused the film to ask a thought question and students responded in writing. In addition, students had access to the script on laptops, and were annotating it as another means of taking notes. In the ensuing Socratic seminar, students demonstrated a high level of understanding of the text, as evidenced by their use of references from both the text and the film to support their claims during the class discussion.
- Teachers collaborate around using the arts to support students in accessing challenging academic tasks. For example, students who had finished reading the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* were working with an English as a second language (ESL) teacher to create an e-textile panel project on the book. Students worked in collaborative groups, each one sewing a panel representing a scene from the book. Students explained that they repeatedly referred to the text and to their notes as they created their e-textile scene. Students then turned their panels into e-textile work by sewing into them electronic circuits that would light up when activated.
- Consonant with the school's participation in the Innovation Zone (iZone) and Digital Ready initiatives, teachers across the vast majority of classrooms incorporate the use of technology into their teaching as a support for English language learners. For example, in a Physics class, students working in groups on a pendulum experiment had access (on their laptops) to articles, vocabulary, and templates for their tables of evidence that the teacher had prepared for them. The collaborative group structure of the class allowed students to dissect the articles together and use a variety of technology-based tools, such as Google Translate, to support each other in completing the task.

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers collaborate to create assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the school's curricula and that offer a clear portrait of student mastery and that provide actionable feedback to students and teachers. Teachers supplement these assessments with ongoing checks for understanding and adjust their instruction as needed to meet identified student needs.

Impact

Coherence in assessment practices in and out of the classroom ensure that teachers diagnose student need, make effective instructional adjustments, and ensure that students understand their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Throughout the school, every faculty member uses a learning management system (LMS) to communicate feedback in an ongoing way to students on the assignments that they submit for assessment. The majority (75%) use Schoology, with the remaining 25% using Google Classroom. For example, the ninth/tenth-grade team is piloting a mastery-based assessment grading system based on specific competencies that students must demonstrate as evidence of mastery. Students have ongoing access on Schoology to the criteria for mastery and to teacher feedback on their work. This ongoing feedback mechanism supports student learning as students continually revise and resubmit their work. Students also have immediate and continual access to teacher assessment of their progress toward mastery of the performance criteria.
- Across classrooms, students receive multiple rounds of teacher feedback that enables them to revise and resubmit several drafts until their work meets a college-ready standard. The school's use of technology gives both teachers and students the tools to engage in two-way cumulative feedback so that all comments from each draft appear in the margin on every successive draft. For example, a science lab report on pendulum swings shows that margin comments between teacher and student extended over two weeks. The teacher asked pointed questions about the student's work and the student provided clarifying responses. The student also had the opportunity to ask comprehension questions to which the teacher responded in a subsequent round of margin comments. This process typified the detailed and actionable feedback that students regularly receive from teachers and demonstrated the student learning that results directly from teacher feedback.
- Checking for understanding takes place in multiple ways. For example, teachers use individual and group conferencing during class time to assess student understanding of the task at hand, the content, and the overall themes of the unit. These conferences enable teachers to provide feedback in real time, while individuals and groups are working on their projects. At the end of each class period, students submit a feedback form to the teacher that reflects how much progress they made towards their goals in that period, and what their plans are for use of time in the next period. This check-in at the end of each class completes the checking for understanding cycle for every class period. This information and the iterative feedback loop that it supports assist both teachers and students in conceptualizing what comes next for individual and group learning. "Teachers understand when students need help," students concurred. "They understand that we need extra support and they give it to us."

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

Findings

The school has created teacher teams that provide opportunities for significant distributive leadership in the school. These teams collegially analyze elements of each other's work and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

Impact

Teacher team collaborations result in shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students. The distributive leadership structure ensures that teachers have voice in key instructional decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- The school includes common planning time both for grade team meetings and for department collaboration. Teachers use these opportunities for collaboration to extend their own and student learning. For example, portfolio-based graduation requirements include senior projects in every subject area. All teachers across the school participate with their department teams on grading the senior portfolio projects, regardless of the grade that they teach. Teachers use this collaborative grading exercise to inform curriculum and instruction, especially in the lower grades.
- Teachers discussed the balance that the school strikes between professional autonomy versus structure that gives teachers the flexibility to pilot innovative approaches and continue to develop themselves as educators. For example, two different teams are piloting a new grading system as the school continually refines and improves its own practices and policies.
- Distributed leadership is evidenced in the role that the school's professional development committee plays. This committee includes teacher representatives from each grade team, administrators, and the school literacy coach. Any member of the faculty may bring ideas for professional development to the team for discussion and possible implementation. The professional development committee played an instrumental role in designing the PROSE proposal that evolved into the school's current teacher evaluation system.