



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Brooklyn Academy

High School K553

**832 Marcy Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11216**

Principal: Charon Hall

**Date of review: May 15, 2015
Lead Reviewer: LaShawn Robinson**

The School Context

Brooklyn Academy is a transfer high school with 176 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 80% Black, 15% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 20% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 74.0%.

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	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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

This principal established an atmosphere of high expectations where all teachers believe building student content mastery through rigorous instruction will lead to student success in career and college.

Impact

All students are supported in academics and social/emotional development. Students and families are kept abreast of student progress towards the high expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Students shared that they receive support from their teachers in establishing goals and in the college search and application process, for which there are tracking systems to monitor. The community based organization (CBO), CAMBA, hosts college fairs, takes students on college tours, and supports students and parents with the college application and enrollment process. One of the parents reported that students are supported through the college application process and one student shared gleefully that he was accepted to four colleges.
- Students are prepared for college and careers through targeted collaborations between teachers and the community-based organization staff and by engaging students in rigorous curricula and fostering academic habits. Both students and parents reported that the Learning to Work (LTW) program provides students with an opportunity to engage in internship experiences and is helping them to develop important skills in preparation for careers. The school developed a partnership with Mercy College to offer College Now courses. One parent described, "They are following the Common Core Standards here. They are using complex text and breaking them down. As a result my son is not afraid to go to college. He says he can handle it." Student work revealed that students are required to write extensively while citing text based evidence, creating thesis statements, developing their claims and counter claims, and are required to use Modern Language Association (MLA) format in their papers.
- The principal communicates high expectations to staff through a Staff Handbook, frequent cycles of observation and feedback, and a system of ongoing reciprocal communication. High expectations are consistently messaged to students and parents through continuous communication, such as telephone outreach to families, and academic and social-emotional support services offer through the community partnerships. The staff has established a culture for learning. Within this culture of support, students are re-connecting to their academics. As a result, there is culture of mutual accountability and ownership of high expectations. Students are aware their learning goals and supported to meet college readiness expectations.
- Parents indicated that they constantly receive information regarding their children's academic progress and attendance. They described that they receive frequent phone calls from staff to celebrate student success and highlight students' academic needs and address attendance concerns. One parent shared, "This school is very supportive to the students and parents. The students and parents have access to the teachers anytime. It is a great place for my child."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and informed by Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula for all learners.

Impact

Teaching practices aligned to the Common Core instructional shifts support student learning, and differentiated instruction enables all students to participate in engaging tasks, yet there are missed opportunities to engage student in high level discussions, and uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- There is an articulated set of beliefs that students learn best when they received appropriate modeling of instructional expectations. Most lessons observed followed a consistent model, providing students with a warm-up, mini-lesson, guided practice, and independent or group practice. The lessons reflected coherence and alignment to the school's belief that students learn best by engaging in shared learning experiences with their peers. For example, in an English class observed, students had to assess their peers by reviewing part of their critical lens essay on *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Thank You Ma'am*. In Global, students engaged in a Socratic circle to discuss, "How would you evaluate Chaka Zulu's military strategies and leadership?" Through the Socratic circle, students had the opportunity to demonstrate their thinking and justify their answers. These instructional strategies provide an opportunity for students to engage in discussion, peer-assessment, self-assessment, and to collaborate with peers.
- Teachers in all content areas engage their students in a school-wide initiative to improve writing skills across the curricula. Shared practices such as citing textual evidence are implemented in the majority of classrooms. In all classrooms visited, there was evidence of writing across the curricula, either during the class lesson, posted on bulletin board or in student portfolios. Students indicated that they are expected to write frequently and are required to use the MLA format as this is how they will be expected to write in college. Parents stated that the school has a focus on writing across the content areas and developing stamina.
- Although students had an opportunity to work in pairs, participate in Socratic seminars, engage in annotation, and analyze text and contemporary art work, there were uneven levels of student's thinking and discussion and some classrooms were teacher dominated with the arrow of recitation going from teacher-to-student.
- Teaching strategies provide multiple entry points, scaffolds, and extensions so that all learners are engaged. While teaching practices such as the use of a variety of graphic organizers, leveled texts, the Bloom/Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questioning ladder, conversation starters, work models, and intentional groupings are employed across classrooms, there is limited implementation in the purpose and structure of these instructional strategies. Additionally, the area of student extension is not a sufficiently embedded practice.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Careful attention to the alignment of curricula to Common Core Learning Standards enables engagement by all students in cognitively rigorous tasks that prepare them for college and careers.

Impact

There is curricular coherence and alignment across content areas that promote college and career readiness for all students. Curricula and academic tasks are refined using student work.

Supporting Evidence

- Across content, teachers develop lessons and units that infuse writing standards 1 and 2, the speaking and listening standard 1, and the reading standards 1, 2, and 3. For example, the Global curriculum map reviewed highlighted reading and writing Common Core Learning Standards that students engage in throughout the year. In addition, lesson plans collected emphasize reading and writing standards, including analyzing diction. In an English class visited, students were required to analyze *Just Another Day* by Alifa Rifaat.
- School leaders and faculty report that the school utilizes resources from EngageNY and NY State content standards to develop curriculum maps that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and staff take into consideration the needs of students.
- The work with the alignment of units to Common Core Learning Standards, Understanding by Design lesson planning guidelines, and Domain one of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, led the staff to create the 'Essential Elements of a Lesson' document that all teachers use to support lesson design and to promote coherence across the school.
- A review of current curricula units and tasks shows that the units are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and promote the instructional shifts. The units and lessons are designed with objectives and differentiated instructions for grouping, formative assessments, and extended learning to meet the needs of all students, especially students with disabilities, (SWDs), and students that previously struggled to meet content mastery. Lesson and unit plans collected include differentiation strategies to meet the needs of all learners. While the school does not currently have English language learners, (ELLs), on register, the curricula still emphasize supports for ELLs and former ELLs.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers and leaders purposefully use common assessments aligned to the school's curricula to adjust units of study and to monitor student progress. Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use common assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and provide meaningful feedback to students.

Impact

A system of using assessments to provide teachers and students with actionable feedback promotes an understanding of student progress towards goals.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's uniform grading policy, which consists of 30% class work and participation, 10% homework, 10% quizzes and exams, 15% midterm, 15% final, and 20% projects, is displayed throughout the school, giving students clear expectations on how they are graded. Benchmark assessments are used to track student progress in relationship to the end-of-year assessments. Teachers' analysis of these assessments determines that students needed additional support with analytical writing. Teachers committed to this as a focus across the subject areas, using their writing rubrics as a tool for students to receive targeted feedback. As a result, there is an improvement in organization, idea development and analysis in student work.
- There is a current focus on the use of common rubrics across classrooms. Rubrics are used to provide feedback to students regarding next learning steps, and in most classes, students were observed using task specific rubrics, as in an English class. In addition, documents provided for review provide evidence that English teachers provide students with opportunities for peer- and self-assessment. While meeting with students, a student described, "I use the rubrics so often...after a while, I did not need to use the rubric anymorebut I was clear about the expectation."
- Across classrooms observed, teacher checks for understanding include questioning, canvassing the classrooms, listening carefully during student discussion, and exit tickets; however, there were missed opportunities for effective adjustments to meet the needs of all students such as in the global and chemistry classes. Students reported that teachers conference with them about their work and provide them with feedback and next steps so that they can revise their work.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers are engaged in structured inquiry based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals, Common Core Learning Standards, and the requisite instructional shifts. Teams consistently analyze student data and work products and use this information to make instructional adjustments.

Impact

The structured teacher team work strengthens teachers’ instructional capacity and ensures coherence in the school’s instructional focus.

Supporting Evidence

- The work of the inquiry team and peer learning circles has allowed teachers the opportunity to share best practices and promotes instructional coherence. For example, teachers have adopted strategies such as chunking for both the writing process and to support students with complex text. Students reported that this strategy has been helpful and also shared that they now feel ready to engage in the writing process without using any scaffolds.
- Teacher teams consistently use protocols for looking at student work and analyze current student thinking against the desired goals. They also identify gaps between student achievement and grade level goals. Two inquiry groups, one comprised of the English/social studies/art/physical education/Special Education Student Support Teacher, and the other of math/science teachers, conduct frequent analysis of student work using a common tuning protocol. This protocol was observed during the teacher team meeting. Teachers provided each other with feedback and shared strategies and tools to support students. Teachers describe that the inquiry process provides them with additional opportunities to discuss instructional practices and strategies to improve student achievement.
- Teachers engage in the Peer Learning Circle process which affords them opportunities to share best practices, and develop a tool kit of strategies to support the implementation of effective practice for Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques (3B), Engaging Students in Learning (3C), and Using assessment in Instruction (3D), of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The Learning Circles provide an opportunity for teachers to receive targeted feedback, resulting in shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students. One teacher described that she was struggling with implementing effective practices to help students self-assess, but after visiting a colleague, was able to adapt some of her strategies and provide opportunities for students to access the language of the rubric.