



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Brooklyn Generation

High School K566

**6565 Flatlands Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: Lydia Colon Bomani

**Date of review: April 16, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Miatheresa Pate**

The School Context

Brooklyn Generation is a high school with 263 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 86% Black, 8% Hispanic, 2% White, 2% Asian, and 3% other students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 84.30%.

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	Celebration	Proficient
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	Developing
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	Proficient
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:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and academic tasks are planned and refined using student data.

Impact

Purposeful decision making around curricula builds coherence, promotes college and career readiness, and ensures that students are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal indicated that the school has adopted Rubicon Atlas. A review of the online system reflects that all teachers are using the system actively for mapping to develop and revise the curriculum. The principal further affirms that the adoption of Rubicon Atlas supports teachers in vertical and horizontal group meetings to make decisions on lessons taught, and make student data-based modifications to the curriculum as determined by assessment results.
- A review of documents reveals that teachers use a common template when developing unit and lesson plans. The template serves as a guide for teachers to ensure that lesson plan components such as identifying target standards, essential questions, assessments, and differentiated approaches are embedded in the lesson. Additionally, the review of peer lesson plan reflection documents reveals that teachers review their colleague's lessons and provide feedback. For instance, teachers made comments such as "you provided an aim but it seems unclear" and "it is unclear exactly how or if students are processing and discussing."
- The lesson plans reveal that students engage in cognitively demanding activities that align to the instructional shifts. In science, one lesson include tasks such as devising questions about the equilibrium system and determining stresses that can take place on certain chemical equilibriums. In an English language arts (ELA) lesson, tasks required students to develop claims by analyzing and using evidence from *Oedipus the King*. In humanities, student tasks include determining how the allocation of resources within a society affects an individual's ability to make choices.
- A review of documents reveals that teachers refine lessons and unit tasks with the assistance of templates. The templates require teachers to look at student data and work products to isolate evidence of engagement and mastery by responding to questions such as: 1. Are the questions posed by the teacher organized for student learning, understanding, and higher order thinking?" Furthermore, based on student work products, teachers provide recommendations to their colleagues such as, "Most students have a fairly good understanding of the argument on both sides ... students need to spend more time on works cited...the expectations of the appendix and how to use it should be clearly laid out before the project."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming reflective of a set of beliefs about how students learn as aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teachers and instructional shifts. Across classrooms, student work and discussion reflect uneven levels.

Impact

The school has delineated set beliefs about how students learn best yet the implementation of this belief is inconsistent across classrooms resulting in missed opportunities to engage students in high levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal revealed that students learn best when instruction is active in project-based, authentic, or meaningful tasks, linked to connections among subjects, and student – centered where learning is social, and students talk and work together. In addition, the principal stated students learn best when they are focused on understanding where teachers serve as guides for student understanding, and reflective, where students and teachers reflect on their learning. During the observation of an 11th grade chemistry class, students were engaged in an academic task that promoted higher order thinking. The science lesson was focused on equilibrium. Students were required to determine how they could manipulate a system at equilibrium by demonstrating the Le Chatelier's Principle in action. Student responses in groups of two reflected an open dialogue around how to change "stress" via making temperature changes and other reactants. One student suggested increasing the temperature and another student suggested adding more of a particular chemical. This level of student thinking and participation was observed at uneven levels across the classrooms observed.
- A key component to the school's belief about how students learn best is "instruction is focused on student understanding." In Algebra-STEM math class, students were applying systems of equations to compare music contracts, presenting their arguments around the most mathematically sound contract and critique the reasoning of others. Students used a debate format to complete this task yet were unable to answer basic contract related questions from their peers using their mathematical skills. For instance, questions asked were, "How does the artist remain unaffected if sales are low? How would the artist make more money over time if they only receive \$0.10 in royalty for each song sold after the signing bonus?" Students offered responses such as "we are the Eccentric Billionaires ... we are rich, and we will continue to pay them \$200, 000 every year as a signing bonus..." Students were unable to apply systems of equations and responses remained low on Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels.
- Although the practice of students answering rigorous questions via collaborative discussion was observed in some classrooms, it was not evident across the majority of classrooms. For instance, in a 12th grade humanities class, students were navigating through the five phases of a school wide strategy titled, *Five Phases for Understanding*. Students were recording notes, comparing, revising, combining, and reviewing responses during partner work relative to their Food Dessert Socratic Seminar. Students surfaced questions such as, "Does income impact people's food choices...?"

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use common assessments, rubrics, and grading polices aligned to the schools' curricula to set goals and determine student progress.

Impact

The use of common assessments, grading policies and rubrics results in teachers providing actionable feedback to students and adjustments to instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal revealed that the school adopted Ed Performance, a Common Core aligned tool, which provides teachers with student data results relative to targeting instruction. For instance, when reviewing documents from Ed Performance assessments, objectives were provided with an aggregated list of what was tested and names of students who met or did not meet each targeted skill. For instance, student work analysis indicated that students who were tested on the Islamic, Japanese and West African Golden Ages struggled with multiple-choice questions using maps. Documents noted that teachers next steps in response to this noticing reflected three days dedicated to specifically breaking down these types of questions: meaning, use of maps and geography, and additional student-led examples of how to tackle these types of questions
- The bulletin boards observed all have the task and rubrics attached. Sample written feedback reflects alignment with grading policy. For example, a student's work product from a French course displayed a rubric that rated as followed: 4-task completion, 3-organization, and 3-use of vocabulary, 3-conjunction, and 4-word count. Teacher feedback read "Overall, your paragraph was good... be careful of your sentences, make sure they are complete and see me for any vocabulary you may need" Other bulletin boards revealed students reflecting on their peers' work and the teacher providing a confirmation reflection. For instance, a student wrote, "I would give this work a level 3 because it was not clear enough..." The teacher wrote "I agree with your grade, especially what was not clear enough..." Student reflection on class work noted, "It's ok it just needs more information on the prophecy..."
- In classrooms observed students used rubrics. For instance, in a grade 11 chemistry lab, a student aligned their work to a rubric that focused on eight categories: rationale with variables, hypothesis development, material used, procedures applied, use of data/observation, conclusions developed, and classroom performance. Students used the rubric to review their work and determine their progress. Additionally, the teacher was conferring, looking at the rubric and student work to determine when necessary to model examples at the smart board or ask questions to the entire class. Students across classroom had rubrics that they referred to during class work time.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The principal consistently communicates expectations regarding professionalism, instruction, and communication aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching to all teachers. School leaders, teachers and staff share expectations aligned with a path to college and career readiness for all learners.

Impact

A system of ongoing training and feedback helps teachers understand progress towards professional expectations. Targeted guidance/advisement supports prepare students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal communicates expectations regarding the use of questioning and discussion techniques through a Staff Handbook and frequent memorandums to staff. School leaders conduct cycles of observation, and feedback to teachers includes meaningful feedback and next steps. For example, in a teacher observation where the teacher was rated effective in using questioning and discussion techniques, the principal's notes to the teacher included descriptors of practice that would meet the requirements for a rating of highly effective such as, "Questioning should reflect many more level 3 and 4 questions. While many follow up questions prompted students to go deeper, some questions were at levels 1 and 2 which required only recitation or recall to answer." Next steps and resources were outlined for the teacher, including, "Work on your questioning by scripting your questions with the use of our Teacher Questioning Template". Professional development is provided to teachers to support them in meeting these professional expectations.
- Teachers are expected to participate in on-site professional development as well as off-site self-selected professional development opportunities. For example, teachers participate in structured peer inter-visitations, reflect on their learnings, and are expected to incorporate the learned strategies in their daily practice. A professional development work plan included scheduled inter-visitations with an instructional focus of student-to-student talk and questioning strategies. This plan outlined the expectation that teachers would complete at least two inter-visitations, write a summary for each observation outlining any take-aways and the implications for further development of shared teaching and learning strategies regarding the use of questioning and discussion techniques in engaging students in peer-discussion.
- Guidance and advisement supports include tracking of individual student needs that begins with an entrance conference with the principal, and continues with the college advisor, guidance counselor, and social worker facilitating meetings with students, tracking student progress towards graduation, and supporting students through the college search and application process. Further, the school has been selected as a Community School and as such, programs have been implemented to expand critical programs and services such as health care, mentoring, after-school programs, adult education, and other services that support the whole child.

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

Across content and grade level teams, the majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that support the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and the integration of the instructional shifts. The school has a distributed leadership structure in place.

Impact

Teacher team collaboration ensures that Common Core Learning Standards are embedded in each unit of study across grades and subjects, and strengthens the instructional capacity of teachers. A distributive leadership structure builds teacher capacity and provides teachers with a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers participate in a range on teams, including advocacy planning, Kid Talk (discussion and intervention planning for individual students), and content specific teams in which teachers follow a Looking at Student Work (LASW) protocol to plan refinements to units and tasks based on student work analysis, and are expected to engage in structured collaborative inquiry in order to align curricula and tasks with the common Core learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. In addition, teachers participate in peer visitations in which they reflect on the impact of shared teaching strategies. For example, a teacher reflection following a visit to a colleague’s class noted, “I would like to adopt Mr. _____’s approach and I think that, as a team, it would be beneficial for students to have the same Socratic structure. Continued use of the inter-visitiation protocol will allow us to be more consistent with our common practices”.
- Teacher teams collaborate in planning common assessments and implementing shared instructional strategies. For example, minutes from College and Career Intensive co-planning meetings demonstrated teachers’ roles in initiating the use of tracking tools to note students’ demonstration of mastery through do now questions posed by teachers. In addition, grade 9 teachers were involved in the development and implementation of a progress tracking tool titled *My Game Plan for Earning College and Career Credits* which serves as a grading policy and syllabus for the grade 9 unit on sustainability.
- Teachers affirmed that grade level leaders participate with school leadership in instructional cabinet meetings in which teachers assume responsibility for promoting school goals. Agendas from cabinet meetings demonstrate that teachers have a voice in instructional decisions, and that some teachers assume leadership roles in facilitating team meetings with their respective teams. For example, teachers develop and facilitate professional development sessions on topics such as student-to-student talk, questioning strategies, student data analysis, and instructional outcomes.