



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Brownsville Academy High School**

**High School K568**

**1150 East New York Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11212**

**Principal: Katwona Warren**

**Date of review: March 24, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Joan Prince**

## The School Context

Brownsville Academy is a transfer high school with 197 students from grade 10 through grade 12. The school population comprises 83% Black, 12% Hispanic, 0% White, and 0% Asian students, along with 5% American Indian/Alaskan native. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 40% of the students enrolled and girls account for 60%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 75.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

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

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations regarding professionalism, instruction, communication, and other elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students and offer students effective feedback and guidance advisements supports.

### Impact

Training and supports for staff ensure a culture of mutual accountability for high expectations. Guidance/advisement supports ensure that students, including high needs sub-groups, own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders support teachers' reflection on their practice and development of pedagogical strengths on identified areas for growth by providing professional learning opportunities, facilitating inter-visitations, and modeling a commitment to their own learning goals and strategies by continuing their participation in professional development opportunities. Teachers set long-term goals and keep a list of professional development they have attended. School leaders conduct ongoing conferencing with teachers to discuss the progress teachers are making towards their professional goals, and to determine what support is needed to improve instructional practice. The Advance System is used to track progress toward the attainment of teachers' goals and effectiveness through the collection and analysis of lesson plans, unit plans, and pacing calendars.
- Guidance counselors and advisories meet with students on a weekly basis, and sometimes facilitate an additional follow-up meeting with parents in attendance. Advisors identify areas where students need additional support, and ensure that parents are aware of the supports provided at the school to create positive attitudes and build upon academic and socio-emotional structures that align with the schools high expectations.
- All students receive personalized support, and have at least one teacher/adult in the building who knows them well. The outcome is an improvement in attendance and academic outcomes, as students realize that self-esteem and high expectations is needed for attaining the next level. Students stated that, "School is better than home", and shared that they feel supported by staff at all times.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Across classrooms, lesson routines strategically provide multiple entry points into the curricula, and questioning and discussion techniques support a high level of student thinking and participation.

### Impact

All learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order-thinking skills in student work products. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels student thinking and participation.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teaching practices include differentiated activities and the use of instructional strategies that address the learning needs of a diverse population. For example, in a Pre-Regents English class that included students with disabilities, the teacher conferred with a group of students while the others engaged in a group discussion in response to questions. Students expressed themselves confidently, and one student explained that he had been doing extra reading because this subject is so interesting. Student discussion included how power is used, and if they believed there was an abuse of power in our government. The teacher posed the question, “What is legitimate power?” Scholarly articles were provided to each student group, and visuals were provided to aide in comprehension for some groups. Some students were given extra time to formulate their presentation.
- A review of student work across classrooms revealed consistent work in argumentative writing and in stating a claim, counter claim and citing text-based evidence. Instruction is often differentiated for student need. Most lessons included strategies to encourage high level discussion such as requiring student to outline their reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with each other.
- There was evidence of grouping or pairing to assist in creating meaningful work products. Students were engaged in discussions across classroom visited, and in using research skills and discussion protocols. In a Living Environment class that included English language learners and a special education student, the aim of the lesson was to develop a logical argument that suggests whether brains or brawn makes humans stronger. Students were provided with scientific charts on systems in the body, vocabulary prompts, and a prior reading on natural selection was used for reference within each group. Students discussed the use of physical versus mental aids in building one’s strength. In a Global History class lesson on Nationalism which concluded in a Socratic Seminar, the unifying question was, “Is nationalism always a force for bad, or can it sometimes bring benefits?”.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress towards goals. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding student self-assessment.

### Impact

Assessment practices provide students and teachers with actionable feedback regarding student achievement. Curricula and lesson planning is adjusted based on data analysis. Teachers track student progress, and make effective instructional adjustments to meet all students learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers monitor student progress in morning tutoring classes, after school programs and Saturday Academy through an online Goggle Doc tracking system to adjust student grouping, resources and instruction. The staff uses a variety of assessments to assist in accurately identifying student strengths and opportunities for growth. Mock Regents scores are used across grades and subject areas to inform targeted instructional adjustments. Student conferences, family communication, and the individualized education program process are employed so that each student is known well and so that support structures are in place if needed. Teachers used data analysis to develop Math and English courses for struggling learners are offered in two hour block classes to increase literacy competencies and numeracy.
- Several classes were observed interpreting, deconstructing, and/or analyzing rubrics that students would use to self-assess their work. Students spoke in an articulate manner about writing tasks with rubrics. Each student is required to complete a portfolio that reflects their best work in each content area. College Now advisors review these portfolios and make recommendations if a student qualifies for the Elite Scholar program.
- All assessments are aligned with Common Core Learning Standards and the New York State Regents. Item analysis data is used as a check for understanding during mock Regents Exams. There is ongoing assessment in the form of rubrics, Castle Learning, and teacher-student conferences. Classroom checks for understanding are seen in all classes visited in the form of exit tickets, turn and talk, think-pair-share and the 5-4-3-2-1 rating scale.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. Higher order skills are consistently emphasized for all learners across grades and content areas.

### **Impact**

The school's curricula decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all learners. Academic tasks push student thinking across grades and content areas.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Reading, writing and content area units of study integrate the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Planned strategies include tiered-academic vocabulary, fluency, multi-step problem solving, argumentative writing and text based responses.
- Unit plans in all content areas illustrate multiple designs of academic tasks, with numerous scaffolds and entry points for all students. In United States History class lesson plan on immigration and the American dream, the teacher planned for the use of visuals, graphic organizers and a Depth of Knowledge chart on every desk.
- Steps by administration to align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards, instructional shifts, and Webb's Depth of Knowledge higher order skills include providing targeted professional development to teachers regarding content specific standards. With a deeper understanding of the shifts and Depth of Knowledge essential questioning levels, teachers incorporate the shifts and standards in curricula planning. For example, lessons are planned on the Diploma Plus Model with a planning template incorporating the specific Common Core Learning Standards to be addressed in the lesson. There is also a section for teachers to develop higher level thinking questions.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Teachers consistently examine data and student work with inquiry-based teams. A culture of professional learning and distributed leadership provides teachers with opportunities for input on key decisions about curricula and teaching practices.

### Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in improved pedagogy and student progress on assessments. Shared leadership structures build teachers' leadership capacity.

### Supporting Evidence

- All teacher teams meet regularly, with time embedded into the weekly schedule. Teachers work in subject areas to ensure curricula alignment and make key decisions on teaching practices, as evidenced by the teacher team observed, which focused on rigorous learning tasks. Each week the meeting is led by a different teacher who selects the agenda topic.
- Using spreadsheets, targeted student performance data is tracked and analyzed weekly. Teachers were observed analyzing a student assessment and determining which targeted strategies increased the performance and which were unsuccessful based on item analysis. This work was compared to another students' work in an attempt to identify trends and patterns.
- Teachers meet to discuss shared students and identify students in need of support both academically and emotionally. These teachers, called scholar advocates, play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school. A *Scholar Conference Sheet* is used to update teachers on student progress in personal competencies, including self-management, planning and responsibility, integrity, as well as academic competencies. In addition, there is an extensive weekly calendar providing a theme and focus to assist targeted teaching practices, such as, "How do we align our goals to increase the level of rigor in classrooms?"
- Teacher teams plan a calendar of inter-visitations, and make time on their own to debrief and communicate school wide recommendations to the principal weekly. For example, teacher teams recommended that the school provide professional development to teachers on facilitating Socratic Seminars in order to increase the rigor of discussion within classrooms. As a result, a group of teachers participated in off-site professional development, and turn-keyed their learnings to the rest of the staff. This has further empowered teachers to define their needs in building their pedagogical practices.