



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Brooklyn Brownstone School**

**Elementary School K628**

**271 MacDonough Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11233**

**Principal: Nakia Haskins**

**Date of review: May 11, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Joan Prince**

## The School Context

Brooklyn Brownstone is an elementary school with 233 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 85% Black, 12% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 14% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.0%.

## 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 to parents and teachers and provide professional development training on improving pedagogical practices to increase student improvement. The staff communicates high expectations to students.

### Impact

There is a clear system of accountability that has school leaders and teachers jointly accountable for improving pedagogical practices. The school leaders and staff partner with parents/families to support students to increase student learning and improvement.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers set long-term goals at the beginning of the year and keep records of professional development (PD). The principal stated and agendas have shown that there is PD conducted through faculty conferences, grade meetings, and teacher team meetings that offer opportunities to discuss the expectations across four domains of the Danielson Framework for Teaching.
- School leaders provide teachers with detailed feedback outlining the support that is available to them to improve their practice. Expectations are clear for pedagogical and professional practice via verbal and written communication. As an example, there are frequent classroom observations used to communicate high expectations, as evidenced in a calendar and as stated by teachers. Through observations, planning, learning environment, professionalism, and classroom instruction, there is frequent and actionable feedback from peers and administration.
- The parents on the School Leadership Team help to develop the school goals around student achievement and hold meetings to inform other parents of the goals and to take responsibility for helping all students succeed. Parents stated that they were familiar with the Color Behavior System process and Class Dojo, which is used to give them daily and weekly feedback on their children's behaviors and academics. Parents stated that this process was greatly appreciated.
- Every Friday there is a WEEKLY Brownstoner newsletter sent to parents/families containing information about school events and news, further setting the tone of goals with high expectations. The school places an emphasis on core values and holds twice a month community meetings for all classes to which parents are invited. The purpose of these meeting is to convey consistent and effective communication of high expectations coupled with supporting parents/families/students with assistance in guidance and academics if needed. Parents, teachers and students affirmed that these 'coming together' meeting create an understanding about their roles in the school and keep them aware of the expectations shared the school community.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

Teacher pedagogy reflects high engagement levels, student discussion, participation, and independence. Across classrooms teaching strategies consistently provide scaffolding and multiple entry points into the curriculum and classroom practice for all learners.

### Impact

Although all students are participating in discussions reflecting student critical thinking skills, participation, and ownership, expanding discussions was inconsistent across all classrooms. Struggling learners, English language learners, (ELLs), and students with disabilities, (SWDs), are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work. Appropriate use of scaffolding and multiple entry points are being used across classrooms.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has implemented a research based teaching framework with a focus on planning lessons that increase the use of academic language and higher order questioning skills. The entire staff is reading *Thinking Through Quality Questioning: Deepening Student Engage* by J. Walsh and Beth Sattes, to help strengthen pedagogical practices. Whole staff discussions further this effort at professional development session, and continue to be discussed briefly at teacher team meetings.
- There is promotion of oral language, fluency, and the use of evidence, to support assertions, as shown in the pre-kindergarten class when students during turn-and-talk were discussing the difference between shadows and sunshine. Thumbs up were used with whoo/whoos as check-in indicators and students stood up to explain, "What do we know?" The teacher used the white board to provide scaffolding on language (prompts) and also visual aids were provided showing shadows vs. sunshine.
- Most teachers encourage students to frame their own questions and respond to other students. One teacher (1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher) was more directive during her the lesson. She served as the facilitator/questioner during the lesson. In the second grade class, the math Do Now question was posted on the SMARTBoard. The teacher randomly called student volunteers to the board to show and explain how they solved the equation. However, in the fourth grade math class the students were in different groups explaining to each other the 'Why & Process.' There were essential questions charts around the room and students stated that group work makes for mutual accountability and this is "a big deal". Students presented multiple ways to solve problems and had to prove their point. Each group had the same work sheet where answers had to be in whole sentences to explain the process. Groupings had different scaffolding (problem helpers) and different time frames for ending task, therefore groups were allowed to work at their own pace prior to presenting.
- Classroom practices accommodate student's instructional needs while engaging students. There was consistent evidence of multiple entry points across classrooms visited. In several classes a color-coded system was used to affirm understanding of the content covered. In a fourth grade math class, groups at tables had different problems all around the same task. Student math vocabulary cards were at each table and students within the groups were using think/pair/share/ to plan their process.

## Additional Findings

<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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based structure professional collaborations to strengthen teacher instructional capacity and promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed leadership structures are embedded so that there is effective teacher leadership.

### Impact

Teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school. The teacher teams work on an inquiry-based structure to promote the use of the Common Core Learning Standards integration into the curriculum and into the classroom. As a result, both pedagogy and students' outcomes are strengthened.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly and are organized by grade and content area. At the grade 1 team meeting observed, teachers were examining student work and implications. Additionally, teachers share information on Google docs and look for the appropriate implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards into the lesson planning to strengthen student outcomes. During the reviewer's observation and the question and answer period, team-meeting goals were stated as holding each other accountable, to give constructive criticism and support. A major goal throughout the second grade team is for all students to leave the grade with essential foundational skills; therefore, instructional shifts along with the Common Core Learning Standards are embedded into all lesson planning.
- Distributed leadership is shown through teachers' input into the Comprehensive Educational Plan's curriculum goals, and with teacher decision to put into place a social-emotional program called Heartwood, with approval of the principal, which uses topics and themes each month to build on student attitudes. Teachers have made their own commitment to use this program through essential questioning, such as 'What is commitment?', and with learning objectives such as 'Students will develop ethical standards'. The Heartwood program is used school-wide. Furthermore, all teachers at both meetings said that their voice is heard in the school and that they have had an impact on professional development, both in selecting topics and facilitating presentation. Teachers have the opportunity to facilitate workshops and professional development and take turns leading their team meetings.
- Goals are set by the staff each month and Google docs are used to share information. Teams meet with the principal regularly and there is also an 'open door' policy if needed. Teacher's impact on curriculum included the addition of ENGAGE NY to the math focus.
- The work of teacher teams has impacted their pedagogy and in turn student results on assessments. On this year's NYS assessments, students made double digit gains in both math and English language arts. On benchmark assessments, the students have strengthened their ability to answer extended response questions.

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

The faculty utilizes school-wide assessments aligned to curricula to inform and adjust instruction to address student's needs. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

### **Impact**

The school's systems to monitor progress through data analysis, as well as during instruction, are used regularly to guide adjustment in units and lessons to meet students learning needs.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school uses interim assessments aligned to the curricula that are administered three times per year to create individual, whole, and small group corrective instructional plans, for students. Teachers also conduct formative and summative assessments to enhance groupings for productive discussions. Rubrics for all work have actionable feedback and students in classes observed were encouraged to self-assess as well as engage in peer assessment by sharing assignments. Conferencing notes were used as a point of decision in a team meeting as to how important they are in assessing progress and to prescribe next steps.
- The use of on-going checks for understanding, as evidenced in classrooms visited, include exit-slips, journal entries, quizzes, and baseline assessments, to formulate where to go in lesson planning to enhance the strengths and decrease the challenges. In a third grade class where students were sharing and critiquing peer solutions to varied word problems, the teacher was circulating with a check list writing next to each student's name for further analysis after the lesson. The use of labeling work, what steps go where, and adding more details to well organized work, with teachers giving feedback was observed. Prompts as multiple entry points were given through charts, visual aids, and diagrams, including the use of manipulatives and step-by-step guided practice to support students and inform teachers of progress. There is the use of a medial summary using peer-to-peer reflections in several classrooms to also check for understanding.
- Teachers monitor student progress using Fountas & Pinnell and teacher leader created assessments through an online Google Doc tracking system. This system provides the entire staff with baseline/midyear/post assessments and suggestions how to modify units based on this data. Teachers also utilize running records from the Diagnostic Reading Assessment program. Teacher feedback to students via comments on their written work and additional input in the form of critiques from classmates during peer interactions, provide meaningful information to further encourage self-assessment and ownership of learning.

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

The school’s curriculum reflects the Common Core Learning Standards to strengthen student learning and promote college and career readiness. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills across grades and subjects.

**Impact**

All students, including SWDs participate in challenging activities that require thinking, discussion, and engagement, to enrich learning experiences, accelerate progress, and promote college and career readiness, even in the pre-kindergarten.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Curriculum maps and units of study are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the school is constantly reviewing and updating the documents based on student outcomes that are derived at weekly team meetings. The school uses monthly unit plans with sample task from Engage NY, Common Core Learning Standards, NYC Science and Social Studies scope and sequence to assist in creating rigorous tasks to challenge students. Lesson plans all showed the use of questioning techniques, multiple entry points, graphic organizers, and the use of higher-order skills within assignments, geared around Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DoK) levels of questioning.
- An educational consultant has provided professional development for assisting teachers in creating DOK questions and supporting assignments. This was seen in a lesson observed using the Ready Gen Module, on ‘How citizenship is part of our life’. Students were reading different small books and writing details from informational texts. There was evidence of turn-and-talk based on ‘Why is this important?’, and ‘How does citizenship affect our life?’ Writing journals using words from the texts were used to identify the connection between themselves and the people in the stories. The art and music teachers work with classroom teachers to integrate curricula units to reinforce concepts, as evidenced through work on display and in portfolios. Students in the pre-Kindergarten class were writing and learning lyrics to a song for presentation to the entire school and their families.
- The school has focused on oral language development, using text to support an argument, and solving multi-step problems in math to deepen thinking skills and promote college and career readiness. The school has partnered with the nearby middle school for fifth graders to receive enrichment in math and selected students take part in the sixth grade math curriculum. NYU-Poly has partnered with the school to ensure teachers gain knowledge of robotics and conduct activities to engage students in learning and expose them to tools and techniques used by engineers and scientists in the real work.