



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Brooklyn Lab School**

**High School K639**

**999 Jamaica Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11208**

**Principal: Renel Piton**

**Date of review: February 25, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Renee Peart-Zachary**

## The School Context

Brooklyn Lab School is a high school with 337 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 37% Black, 55% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% American Indian, 1% Native Hawaiian, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 64% of the students enrolled and girls account for 36%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 71.0%.

## 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>Celebration</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</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>Developing</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>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</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>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Curricula and academic tasks are refined using student work and data and accentuate rigorous habits for all learners.

### Impact

The school's curricular decisions are resulting in all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, having access to academic tasks that are cognitively engaging and promote higher-order skills.

### Supporting Evidence

- All learners have exposure to academic tasks that emphasize rigorous habits. For example, in a grade 10 Earth Science task, students must write an essay stating their position on how metamorphic, sedimentary, or igneous rocks affect human society. Students were given three articles to read to extract textual evidence to support their claim. In a grade 10 Global Studies task, students must read and annotate articles on democracy and communism groups. Students must write the pros and cons of the democratic and communist nations and provide evidence to support their findings.
- During meetings that take twice a week, department teams review specific student work products and assessment results to refine units of study. For example, the science department reviewed teacher created unit assessments and discovered that the Earth Dynamic Crust unit plan needed adjustments based on students' struggles on content, vocabulary, and including supporting evidence in their essays. The teachers adjusted the activities in the unit and altered their lessons by re-teaching how to support a claim, adding vocabulary, and implementing materials to support ELLs and students with disabilities such as translation of text, graphic organizers, and sentence starters.
- A review of lesson plans and unit plans revealed that across classrooms visited, teachers adjusted unit plans to meet the needs of their students. For example, in an Intermediate-Advance, English as a Second Language (ESL) unit on Important Figures in History, the teacher adjusted the unit by including additional vocabulary, visual aids, and different graphic organizers for group of students.

## Area of Focus

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

School leaders and staff are developing expectations and systems to deliver feedback to families concerning student progress. The school is emerging into a culture that communicates high expectations and guidance supports for all learners.

### Impact

Parents are not yet receiving consistent communication that connects to a path to college and career readiness. The school's communication to students is hindering all learners from being fully informed to prepare for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders reported that parents receive report cards six times a year and progress reports four times a year, and teachers provide ongoing academic information to parents via Pupilpath that is an online grading system. However, parents reported that Pupilpath is not always accurate and often conflicts with the progress reports. One parent said, "I am not aware that this program is available to us." A second parent said, "Pupilpath gives me information about my child's behavior but not correct information about my child's grades." A third parent said, "I had to come up to the school and speak to a teacher because Pupilpath did not match the progress report."
- School leaders reported that parents receive information on college and career readiness and curricular expectations through the school's hosted Parent Curriculum Night event and the administrators created newsletter. School leaders also reported that the Cypress Hill Local Development Corporation, an on-site community based organization (CBO), provides college workshops for parents and conducts one-to-one meetings on the college application process. However, some parents reported that they are not aware of the on-site CBO, college workshops, or supports for parents to help them understand their children's progress. One parent said, "I received a call inviting me to a college workshop. A second parent said, "I did not receive a call or an invitation to the college workshop but I get calls about my child's attendance." A third parent said, "I think the CBO mainly works with grade 12 parents".
- The school has a Peer Group Connection Mentoring advisory program where every student meets with a teacher mentor six times during the school year. School leaders reported that in addition to these meetings with teacher mentors, students receive college advisement from the on-site CBO. However, some students reported that they receive college advisement only if they take the initiative to enroll in the program offered by the CBO and some teachers advise them of what they need to know to get to the next level. A student said, "We get the college information only if we enroll in the program and every student does not get the information." When students were asked what they would like to see improved in the school, one student said, "I would like the school to be consistent."
- The school holds monthly grade town hall meetings where the staff acknowledges student accomplishments and review graduation requirements. Students confirmed that these monthly town hall meetings take place and were able to identify that 44 high school credits are needed for graduation. However, some students were unable to clearly articulate what specific course they need to complete on the path to graduation.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming connected to a coherent set of beliefs aligned to Danielson Framework for Teaching. High levels of student thinking and participation are emerging school-wide.

### Impact

Teaching practices are hindering consistent high-quality student work products and improved student performance for all learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders reported that the school believes students learn best when there is rigorous reading that leads to high quality writing, teaching practices that include Norman Webb's Depth of Knowledge level three and four questions, and high-level student discussions. Across classrooms visited, these practices were documented in lesson plans but inconsistently executed in the delivery of the lessons. For example, in a grade 10 Earth Science class, the students read an article titled "How Carbob-14 Dating Works" by Marshall Brain and discussed facts from the article with their partners. The teacher asked higher-order questions to assess students understanding on the content. However, in a grade 10 Geometry class, the teacher asked low level, close-ended questions to assess students understanding of trigonometric ratios. The teacher asked, "What did you get for Sin A? Good. Who agrees? Great." The teacher did not ask students to model, explain, evaluate, or discuss why they agree with their peers' answers.
- Across classroom visited, discussions reflected uneven levels of student thinking and participation. For example, in a grade 9 United States History class, the teacher-directed lesson allowed minimal opportunities for high-level student discussions. The teacher asked questions on how the United States invaded Cuba. Students were not given time to deepen their thinking on the content. In an advance ESL class, students watched a video and worked in groups to communicate facts on Malcolm X with their peers. Students had no opportunities to deepen their thoughts of Malcolm X practices. Student leaders for the group were given a script on what to say to their peers and were observed following the script. However, in a grade 10 Global Studies class, the teachers provided opportunities for students to engage in high-level discussions with their peers. Students discussed the Do Now question: If there is a huge gang war, and only two gangs are left standing, how do they know one of the two gangs should take control over the neighborhood?
- In a grade 12 Advance Placement English class, students gave their peers glow and grow feedback of their Socratic Circle discussions on the novel *The Prince* by Niccolo Machiavelli. Students were asked to write how their peer discussions influence their understanding of the story. These types of high levels student discussions that lead to high quality writing were observed in only three out of eight classes.

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

Across classrooms, teachers create assessments, use rubrics and a school-wide grading policy, and provide limited feedback to students. Teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding, opportunities for students to self-assess their work, and effective adjustments to the lesson to meet students' learning needs.

### **Impact**

The school's assessment practices are hindering all learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, from being consistently informed of their next learning steps.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders reported that during a lesson, teachers check for understanding using exit slips, observing and asking questions, and recording their findings. Across classroom visited, teachers asked questions but inconsistently check for understanding by capturing summative data to make effective adjustments to the lesson. For example, in a grade 9 English Integrated Co-Teaching class, students wrote in their journals on examples of characterization and personification. The teachers recorded their observations of students' writing styles and discussed their findings with groups of students. However, in a grade 10 Global Studies class, the teachers recorded students' participation in the student discussions rather than the student's struggles or strengths on the content.
- A review of student work products and assessments in student work folders revealed that the school uses assessments and rubrics but provide students with inconsistent actionable feedback. For example, some students receive feedback such as "Very good", "Excellent", "Use your personal viewpoint and next time watch out for your word order and subject-verb agreement" and other students receive just a check for completion of the task.
- School leaders reported that students self-assess their work by reviewing their assessments in their work folders and using rubrics. In student work folders, all learners have an assessment calendar and an assessment reflection sheet where they must complete the sentence: To get a... next time I will... Additionally, students have a self-monitoring log where they record the assignment, grade, goal for the grade on the next assignment, and action plan. On the action plan, students answer these questions: What do I plan to improve upon and how? If I did not complete this assignment, why? A review of student folders revealed that some assessment reflection sheets and self-monitoring logs are incomplete. Furthermore, students reported that some teachers do not require them to complete their self-assessment reflection sheets and self-monitoring logs. Students also reported that some teachers give them rubrics to check their work in classrooms. A student said, "I use rubrics but mainly in science and English."

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engrossed in structured, inquiry-based collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers have built leadership opportunities and have a voice in key instructional decisions

**Impact**

The work of the teacher team is resulting in strengthening opportunities for teachers to share best practices. Teacher leaders have input in school-wide instructional outcomes that affect student learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Department and grade-level teacher leaders meet once a week with school leaders in cabinet meetings. At these meetings, teacher leaders share teacher team meeting outcomes and discuss instructional recommendations that are implemented school-wide. For example, a teacher created the “Each One, Teach One” strategy where teachers provide students with differentiated text and students must turn-key the content of the text to their peers. The teachers implemented this strategy to increase student discussions and enhance rigorous lessons. This strategy is now being used school-wide.
- Grade-level teams meet twice a week to discuss ten students who have been selected for the inquiry- based collaborations. At these meetings, teachers review student work for the inquiry selected students, Measures of Student Learning data, and discuss next steps to implement in forthcoming lessons. For example, in a grade 11 inquiry team meeting, teachers used a protocol to provide their colleague with feedback on a student task on HeLa cells. Teachers reviewed the task and shared low inference data on the student work product. Teachers shared how the student did not address the prompt or capture detailed evidence. Teachers made recommendations and discussed what they would do to support the student in forthcoming lessons. The teachers discussed skills such as re-teaching and modeling.
- Department teams meet twice a week and the department teacher leaders provide the cabinet team with outcomes from the department meetings. Department teacher leaders and teachers shared that their voice is welcomed and valued by school leaders. Teachers reported that they use Terrific Tuesdays where they highlight best practices, emails to the principal and assistant principal, and informal meetings with school leaders to share their suggestions on instructional strategies that affect student learning.