



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Brooklyn High School for The Arts

High School K656

**345 Dean Street
Brooklyn
NY 11217**

Principal: Margaret Lacey Berman

**Date of review: April 21, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Maribel Hulla**

The School Context

The Brooklyn High School for the Arts is a high school with 848 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 70% Black, 22% Hispanic, 2% White, 2% Asian and 4% other students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 3% special education students. Boys account for 27% of the students enrolled and girls account for 73%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.5%.

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	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff and provide training to meet those expectations. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students and provide clear, focused feedback and personalized guidance supports.

Impact

The school's effective communication of high expectations to staff results in a culture of mutual accountability for those expectations. Guidance and advisement supports ensure that all students, including high-needs subgroups, own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- During the student meeting, students shared that at least one adult knows them well. One student said, "Our teachers look out for us, there is a high level of respect between staff and students." Teachers shared that they attend to the students' social-emotional needs, and administration helps to maintain that. One of the school's goals is to help students develop independence and self-advocacy so that students are well prepared and college ready. Furthermore, the school is a model for the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program, which targets students in the academic middle spectrum to challenge themselves by working hard and working towards their fullest potential. Tutors from a variety of colleges such as Hunter, Pratt, and Long Island University assist students with the demands of the rigorous curriculum. The program keeps in mind the individual perspective of students and staff, while allowing each to identify with the goals and motivations behind the actions of the other. According to students, teachers, administrators and parents, AVID academic and social supports hold students accountable to the highest standards so that they will rise to the challenge.
- Teacher teams shared that they lead professional development sessions where teachers provide their peers with feedback, and teachers visit their colleagues' classrooms to see the implementation of the professional development. Teachers reported that they trust each other and feel comfortable visiting their peers' classrooms because they learn from each other. They have a system in place called, *Post It Pop In* when leaders and teachers observe a teacher during a lesson and write feedback on the post it. As one teacher said, "We meet daily during our common plan time and we are always giving each other feedback and support".
- The school has a detailed professional development plan that was collaboratively created and is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching as well as the school's instructional focus, which is reading and writing across the curricula. Professional learning is facilitated by administrators as well as teachers. Teachers referenced that this change in professional learning has allowed teachers to take a much greater ownership role in sharing of best practices across all departments. The principal also shared how strengthening the collaboration has helped teachers implement the school's instructional focus, which is evident in feedback given on teacher observations. This culture of mutual accountability for high expectations has allowed staff to better support each other during professional learning and individual free time.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching strategies strategically provide multiple entry points and high-quality supports for all learners. Student discussion and work products reflect high levels of student thinking, participation and ownership.

Impact

In the vast majority of classrooms, all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are motivated and actively engaged in classroom activities and discussions, resulting in the production of meaningful work products that prepare students for college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use a variety of strategies to ensure all students access the material. In a grade 10 Global History class, students discussed and wrote about the effects of the French Revolution. Students collaborated with peers and used graphic organizers to record and organize text based answers and their thoughts. In an Advanced Placement United States History class, students used a laptop to input their opinion on the question, “Why was Montgomery successful?” Students shared their writing pieces on the same topic, and engaged in discussions within their peer groups.
- Purposeful grouping of students was seen in the vast majority of classrooms. In an Advanced Placement literature class in which students participated in a Socratic seminar, students were grouped based on their opinion and understanding of how two authors developed the themes in their text. Groups discussed which characters were similar and used a template to bullet significant scenes, symbols, and actions of a character as evidence for the theme. In an Algebra class, students were grouped homogeneously based on results from previous assessments. In a dance class students were grouped based on fitness level and the amount of dance experience. In all classes, student group leaders hold others accountable for their contribution to the choreography. Students stated that they frequently work in different groups depending on the class and the topic that is being covered.
- The vast majority of students could articulate what they were learning and why it was important. In a literacy intervention class that included students with disabilities, students were engaged in a conversation about the Mahatma Gandhi quote, “The future depends on what we do in the present”. Students discussed the question, “Why does it matter for the future and how does the quote relate to you as a student?” One student stated, “Everything in the present counts towards future success. If you drop out or go down the wrong road then your future won’t be good.” In a math class, students were learning how to write an equation of a line when only given two points on the line. In this class, students explained how today’s lesson built upon the previous lessons and how they would use this information in future lessons on creating equations.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Higher order skills are emphasized in curricula and tasks in a coherent way across grades and content areas and for all learners.

Impact

All students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are consistently exposed to higher level tasks across grades and content areas, and are required to demonstrate their thinking in tasks that promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- All departments have clearly defined criteria for what students need to know and what skills they need to master to move to the next grade, ensuring coherency. A review of the English and history department's expectations showed that grade 9 and 10, students are expected to cite strong textual evidence to support analysis of the text. In grade 11 and 12, students are expected to determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis. As students move from Algebra to Geometry, they are expected to master modeling, functions, and deciphering word problems. As they move from Geometry to Algebra II, they are expected to solve multi-step problems and provide explanations.
- The school has created templates for curricula maps, unit plans and lesson plans that have been adopted by the vast majority of teachers, and have developed a process for teachers and administrators to peer review all teacher work products. Curricula plans include the big idea/enduring understandings, essential questions, topic, skills and strategies, assessments and Common Core Learning Standards. Specifically, a review of English and Global history curricula plans provided evidence of purposeful planning for all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities. Plans are also aligned to the instructional focus of increasing literacy across all subject areas through reading and writing and include a variety of depth of knowledge level questions and activities. For example, a lesson plan provided students with the opportunity to show their understanding of *The Great Gatsby* and *The Lord of the Flies*, through an artistic representation in which they were expected to use symbols to depict two characters then write about them.
- Lesson plans across all content areas and grade levels revealed that tasks consistently emphasize higher order thinking skills such as citing evidence, developing logical arguments, analyzing information from multiple sources, and applying concepts in real world situations. In a grade 10 math lesson plan, students were expected to derive the three Pythagorean identities and use them to simplify trigonometric expressions. In a grade 10 English language arts lesson plan, students were required to draw connections from two texts in order to compare and contrast themes and characteristics of characters. This lesson plan stated that English language learners and students with disabilities would be provided with two types of graphic organizers to display how a character changes over the course of the text.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school uses data from common assessments to adjust curricula and instruction. Across the vast majority of classes, teachers regularly check for understanding and use the information to make instructional adjustments.

Impact

The school's use of common assessments, data analysis and regular use of checks for understanding allows teachers to determine student progress towards goals and adjust instruction accordingly to meet the needs of all students, so that all students, including English language learners and student with disabilities, demonstrate increased mastery and are aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Common end of unit performance assessments are administered in all core subject areas and the data is used by teachers to adjust curricula and instructional strategies. For example, an analysis of a data binder included tracking sheets for students for an English baseline assessment, which was used to inform individual classroom instruction as well as content team instruction. When analyzed data showed that students needed support with developing/writing a textual analysis essay, teachers made adjustments to unit and lesson plans to target instruction for all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities. In the January 2015 English Regents assessment, there was an improvement in students' argumentative essays.
- Across classrooms observed, teachers consistently used a variety of methods to check for understanding, such as exit slips, one-on-one conferencing with individual students as well as groups of students, and purposeful questioning. For example, in a grade 10 Global History integrated co-teaching class, both teachers conferenced with specific students as well as groups of students to ensure they understood the task and were using each other and the texts as resources for completing the assignment. Students also worked in pairs using a rubric to ensure they understood the task and to peer assess student work. In the grade 10 Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) class students reviewed their recent assessments and discussed how they would utilize their time to study and get better grades. Students were assigned to work in one of three groups. One group created a tutorial form that displayed what support they needed, another group analyzed a recent Spanish assessment and made adjustments, and the third group created a fact sheet on how to study for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).
- Rubrics are used by teachers as a tool to check for understanding and make on demand adjustments to a lesson or student work product. Students are also provided with an independent objective sheet for their individual goals. In an AVID class, students are asked to complete a tutorial request form (TRF) where they make a self-reflection. Students describe how they develop a question and how they find the answer during the tutorial session. Students also describe how the tutorial will help them in their other classes.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Teacher teams systematically analyze key teacher practices, assessment data, and student work. Distributive leadership structures are embedded school-wide.

Impact

Teacher teams contribute to shared improvement in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students. Teachers play an integral role in key instructional decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Department teams meet once a week to thoroughly analyze data and student work. Teams use the *Tuning Protocol* to discuss and analyze student work. For example, at a social studies department team meeting, a teacher facilitated the meeting while another teacher presented and discussed student work. Other teachers listened in then shared how the discussion related to students in their classes. Teachers analyzed students' responses to open-ended questions and essays from a Regents assessment. Teachers also created and reviewed a detailed item analysis and a Common Core aligned rubric to deepen their understanding of student misconceptions. Teachers discussed goals, trends, gaps, and next steps. Teachers noted the improvement in the structure of the essays analyzed and noted that there is still work to do in the area of writing about a theme.
- Every department meets with school leaders to discuss team outcomes, student progress, and student action plans. Teachers play a central part in school-wide instructional decisions such as curricula adjustments, assessments, professional development and student activities. The school has established a professional learning team whose purpose is to develop professional learning opportunities that will be implemented with the understanding that schools best serve their students when they collaboratively determine the goals, content and structures of professional learning. A teacher at the teacher team meeting stated that "Collaboration happens among all teachers, common trends are discussed so that everybody is on the same page and one thing is tackled at a time." Teachers have access to documents that support professional growth and instructional practices through Google docs. For example, documents such as the *Post It Pop In* protocol and log (which teachers use to give each other feedback) and the professional learning agendas and minutes based on content team meetings are accessible through good docs as well as the professional learning binder.
- During a social studies teacher team meeting, teachers discussed how they could increase student use of evidence and understanding when writing about a theme. Teachers reviewed student work and the rubric used to assess the essay. Teachers gave examples of how they could improve student understanding of themes such as, incorporating thematic graphic organizers, bulleting details from a text, and highlighting important information. To ensure that all students could access the material, teachers agreed to start by revisiting the essays from the Global History Regents exam. Teachers and students would identify how the essay was graded by analyzing the rubric and work on improving the essay. Teachers then agreed to visit each other's classrooms to observe how each teacher would implement the strategies discussed and assess its effectiveness.