Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Brooklyn Academy of Global Finance

School Designation K688

125 Stuyvesant Ave
Brooklyn
NY 11221

Principal: Danielle Darbee

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Lead Reviewer: Mark Ossenheimer

The School Context

The Brooklyn Academy of Global Finance is a high school with 149 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 72% Black, 20% Hispanic, 2% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 59% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 78%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Developing**
School Culture		
To what extent does the school…	**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		
To what extent does the school…	**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 the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits across grades and subjects for English language learners and special education students.

Impact
The school's curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Academic tasks challenge student thinking and are accessible for a variety of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses the Understanding by Design (UbD) structure in curriculum planning to ensure alignment and coherency between objectives, assessments, and academic tasks. The school has an expert UbD consultant who provides feedback to teachers on the implementation of written units with a focus on Common Core aligned performance tasks. All observed classes had lesson plans, which were aligned with, and part of the planned unit, using the UbD model, creating coherency across subjects.

- The school uses New Visions for New Schools Curricula for Living Environment and United States History that are aligned to CCLS and emphasize performance based tasks and assessments.

- New Visions' Living Environment, United States History, and Mathematics coaches work on-site twice a month with teachers to plan and implement CCLS aligned units and performance tasks in their classes. Teachers attend monthly CCLS training in Mathematics & Literacy provided by New Visions.

- Lesson plans of observed classrooms with corresponding unit plans demonstrate consistent use of Webb's Depth of Knowledge and Bloom's Taxonomy in developing rigorous questions. For example, both the Global History and the United States History lesson plans embedded verbs from Bloom's taxonomy in order to ensure higher-level tasks.

- Academic tasks are tiered into high, medium, and low in order to provide access and supports for students to reach the same end product/performance task, For example, the Geometry Integrated Collaborative Teaching (ICT) classroom lesson on translations had a three-tiered task, which ranged in the level of structure and guidance based on ability. The lowest tier received explicit examples as models and the highest tier required an entry point that had fewer models.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and are beginning to reflect in student work and discussions, a set of beliefs about how students learn best informed by the Danielson Framework.

Impact
The school's instructional focus that promotes student thinking and discussion is developing in practice so that across classrooms student work products reflect deepening yet uneven levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's focus on developing literacy skills through the "literacy skill of the week" is evident across classrooms through the posting of skills, and supported in both the humanities and mathematics/science teams observed. However, the current weekly skill of paraphrasing was observed in the mini-lesson of Algebra, and the tasks of 9th grade English language arts, and United States History, but not explicitly throughout the other observed classes.

- During class discussions students frequently used accountable talk stems "I agree with X because," "I disagree with X because, " and "To build on what X said" in response to higher order thinking questions, however the majority of classrooms maintained a discussion pattern of teacher-student-teacher. For example, in one class, students were responding to questions asking them to evaluate the effectiveness of Utopianism, as well as compare belief structures of utilitarianism and socialism, but students did not directly engage with one another but rather through the teacher.

- Tasks across the content areas are increasing the use of evidence to support claims and arguments. For example, a 9th grade English language arts class task was to identify text-based evidence using a graphic organizer regarding the issue of danger in the autobiography *Night*. However, in another class, a highly engaged Socratic Seminar discussing a controversial article had several missed opportunities to refer to the text to support answers to student-generated questions and instead focused on personal opinions.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use assessments and rubrics that are becoming aligned to the schools curricula and assessment policy. Teacher's classroom assessment practices reflect an inconsistent use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact
Assessments and rubrics provide limited feedback to students regarding achievement and next learning steps. The limited use of checks for understanding during instruction results in inconsistent adjustments to meet student-learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has developed a monthly calendar across subjects of major formative and summative assessments that includes teacher designed, New York City Performance Assessments, and state Regent examinations including practice mock Regents. The assessments inform teachers regarding student achievement levels, however students could not articulate their own levels of achievement or growth on these assessments outside of overall course grades.

- Rubrics are used across subject areas including English language arts, Living Environment, and Algebra. On student work posted in classrooms and hallways there was inconsistent levels in the amount of actionable feedback. For example, in the mathematics classroom there was attached rubrics with next learning steps, but on essays posted in the hallway, rubrics were simply circled with no next learning step articulated.

- Students articulated the use of rubrics and checklists in classes and stated that teachers "give us a lot of feedback in the classroom", however a review of student work across subjects demonstrated the majority of work is assessed using percentages and circled rubrics. Students stated they do not regularly self-assess outside of checklists used during work production and have had limited opportunity to peer assess/edit.

- The use of checks for understanding was limited in planning and implementation to exit slips and a temperature check protocol of "thumbs up, sideways, or down." While the geometry teacher made an adjustment based on a temperature check that involved her providing an additional example to solidify the mathematical concept of translations, other classes that engaged in temperature checks resulted in no shifts in instruction for those students who had a thumb sideways or down.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate professional and instructional expectations to the entire staff and provide training and supports for staff. Teacher teams and staff consistently communicate high expectations for all students and offer the necessary guidance supports to prepare students for the next level.

Impact
The school has established a culture for learning that communicates clear expectations to staff and students, ensuring every student is known well, and provides necessary supports to achieve those career and college ready expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Instructional goals are developed collectively between school leaders and staff in order to create shared accountability to the Danielson Framework. These expectations were observed across classrooms and teams and embedded in planning documents across subjects. Teachers receive instructional support from New Visions coaches and school leaders that is captured in ongoing written feedback.

- The school has established a work based internship program and College Now through Medgar Evers College. In addition, monthly college and career readiness sessions are facilitated and hosted by JP Morgan Chase via the school's PENCIL partnership.

- All students are assigned to an academic advisor who meets with them at least once a week to monitor progress, review interventions, and set individual goals. The school has also established a peer-mentoring program called Peer Group Connection with the Center for Supportive Schools. Fourteen upper-class students mentor 9th grade students weekly. The peer mentors are trained by two faculty members who are supported by the Center for Supportive Schools.

- The school has developed a "Pyramid of Support and Intervention" that is a three tiered approach of escalating interventions for students in need used by teachers and teams, and tracked by the guidance and administrative teams. The student tracker lists specific interventions and supports across the pyramid shaped chart. For example, one student has "attendance meeting, parent outreach through advisor, and one-on-one tutoring" while another students' supports include "Saturday school, conduct sheet, and increased tutoring from ESL teacher."

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

Findings
Teachers are engaged in structured inquiry based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals, Common Core Learning Standards, and the requisite instructional shifts. Teams consistently analyze student data and work products.

Impact
The schools inquiry approach is strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers and improving progress towards goals for cohorts of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Vertical humanities and science, technology and mathematics (STEM) teams meet twice a week on Tuesday and Thursdays. Both teams were observed using student work analysis protocols. The humanities team used a New Visions protocol and the STEM team used an Atlas developed protocol.

- Teachers with shared students identify small group of focus students whose work is presented, instructional interventions developed, and re-visited through the year. The focus of the work is the lens of the school's instructional focus on literacy and specifically on teaching writing. Teachers discussed how the process has moved students to higher levels of differentiated tiers. One 'focus student' struggled with writing a coherent paragraph in September has had instructional intervention in planning and sequencing of ideas and now writes full essays.

- The STEM team has used team time to develop literacy strategies into STEM lessons and student work aligned to the school goal of literacy across the curricula. The work presented for an Algebra student resulted in the team identifying several scaffolding strategies that included the literacy skill of the week paraphrasing as a next step.

- Teams log minutes, action plans, and next step updates via a Google Form that feeds into a spreadsheet reviewed by administration.

- Scholarship reports used by teacher teams to measure progress and student learning indicate increased course pass rates for focus students and students as a whole who benefit from increased levels of interventions and strategies developed at the team level. For example, the percentage of first year students who passed with 10 or more credits increased from 52% to 71% and for third year students increased from 44% to 69% according to the 2013-2014 School Quality Guide. Data from the current year indicates similar or better results based on current pass rates.