



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Brooklyn Studio Secondary School

Secondary School K690

**8310 21st Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11214**

Principal: Andrea Ciliotta

**Date of review: January 7, 2015
Lead Reviewer: David Raubvogel**

The School Context

Brooklyn Studio Secondary School is a secondary school with 900 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises of 5% Black, 26% Hispanic, 26% White, and 16% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 89.9%.

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	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		
<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	Proficient
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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

High expectations are consistently communicated to staff via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and professional development opportunities. School leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations to students and families connected to a path for college and career readiness.

Impact

School leaders have established a system of accountability for staff and offer ongoing feedback to help families understand their child's progress towards the school's high expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- During a parent meeting, parents shared how the school does an excellent job of informing them of all upcoming events and provides regular updates about their children's academic progress. Parents mentioned how teachers regularly call and inform them of how their child is doing in class, remind them of upcoming exam dates, alert them of missing assignments, and inform them of when their child has outperformed expectations. Parents also spoke to how teachers provide parents with on-line resources, regularly answer emails and phone calls, and provide sample answers to difficult problems in order to help them support their children at home.
- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff through the Staff Handbook and meetings with the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT). School leaders use these mediums to discuss school-wide and individual expectations for classroom teaching practices. Monthly professional development in all areas of the Danielson Framework for Teaching is provided collaboratively with staff and lists of "Best Practices" in all domains are collected and shared with staff.
- A review of the school's very detailed student and parent handbook, which was created collaboratively by the school leadership, teachers, parents and students and is regularly reviewed every year to ensure relevance, clearly outlines all student and parent expectations, identifies resources and supports available to students and parents, as well as informs parents on the multiple ways they can communicate with all staff members to discuss concerns.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula, and student work products and discussions around instructional shifts, reflect uneven levels of student understanding.

Impact

Across classrooms, missed opportunities to engage all learners in consistent challenging tasks and higher order thinking hinder students from exhibiting their work at high levels and being integral to their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Although students were working collaboratively across classrooms visited, yet in some instances, not all students were prompted to actively engage in the discussions within their groups. This prevented some students from articulating the work of the group and having a full understanding of the material being covered. For example, in a Global History class where students were debating European Imperialism in Africa, teacher facilitation and the arrow of recitation allowed only some students to participate. In a math class, students were arranged in groups and assigned a problem to solve and present to the class. While presenting, other students were not engaged in the examples and did not attempt to record the problems in their notebooks.
- Although written lesson plans aligned to the curricula and the principal and teachers were able to describe their school-wide instructional focus of STORM, an acronym used to represent the school's core focus, student to student interaction, textual based evidence to support ideas, rigor and multiple entry points within teacher practice was inconsistent in reflecting these articulated set of beliefs. For example, students citing evidence in their writing and speaking. This practice was not consistently observed across the majority of classrooms visited. In one history class, although students were asked to read an article and defend a claim and counter claim during class discussion, the teacher did not ask the students to cite evidence during their discussion. In another history class, while there was evidence of students annotating the text that they had just read, some students could not explain how this practice was helping them complete the task.
- In the majority of classrooms visited, questioning strategies to promote higher levels of students thinking and discussion were inconsistent. Some teachers asked only low level recall questions that did not ask for students to specifically think or to extend their thinking. In other classrooms, when students asked questions, instead of redirecting these questions back towards the class to promote student thinking and discussion, teachers simply answered the questions and moved on. For example in an ELA class questions were mainly Level 1 recall questions, such as "How has the plot thickened in the end of Act III?" and "How is dramatic irony present in Act III?"

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards. Academic tasks and curricula consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all students.

Impact

The school's purposeful curriculum decisions and rigorous tasks build coherence, promote rigor, and college and career readiness for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Unit plans in all content areas illustrate multiple designs of academic tasks, with numerous scaffolds and entry points for all students. For example, a seventh grade math unit on ratios and proportional relations identifies multiple support strategies such as ability grouping and assistive technology, or identifying potential student misconceptions, such as students believing that a unit price is the price of one item. A ninth grade Global History and Geography unit of study written on The Rise of Civilizations also identifies multiple design strategies and entry points such as journal entry, picture walks, t-charts and graphic organizers as well as multiple forms of tasks that will be used throughout the unit including oral and written reports, R.A.F.T. (role of the writer, audience, format and topic), research projects, and a Document-Based Questions (DBQ) essay.
- Lesson plans require students to cite evidence, analyze information, develop claims and counter claims, and apply concepts to solve real-world problems. For example, a review of a lesson plan requires students to analyze information from a variety of sources and draw a conclusion based on their findings. In an integrated algebra math lesson plan, students are required to work collaboratively and solve multi-step inequalities and graph solutions and then apply these same skills to real world situations. In a third lesson plan, students are required to write a claim-based piece related to a primary source document citing evidence from the document to defend their stance.
- Student work and tasks displayed in the corridors and culminating activities found in unit plans across all subject areas were aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards.

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics and grading polies that are loosely aligned with the school's curricula and are developing their use of common assessments to measure student progress toward goals.

Impact

Students receive inconsistent actionable feedback hindering teachers to set goals in order to gauge student progress and adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Conversations with teachers indicated that the school is inconsistent in its use of common assessments to measure student progress towards goals across grades. Not all students take common baseline assessments across subject areas and classes. Although the school administers a common midterm and final in each subject, interim benchmark assessments to measure student progress were somewhat evident. Teacher teams analyze the data from these larger assessments; however, they do not use this data to set goals for students or groups of students.
- Across classrooms teachers use assessments, however, actionable feedback to students is limited. A review of student work products captured in the school's Benchmark Portfolio System, notebooks and displayed work in classrooms and hallways across all subject areas showed limited actionable feedback. Conversations with teachers and students also confirmed that feedback was not used to measure student progress towards goals.
- Teachers articulated the importance of rubrics accompanied by actionable feedback, however, a review of the school's Professional Development Plan did not indicate any sessions devoted to rubric development, use in assessment or use in providing actionable written feedback.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based collaborations. Distributed leadership structures allow teachers to have a voice in key decisions across the school.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has strengthened teacher collaboration resulting in improvements to pedagogical practices and a stronger voice in key decisions affecting supports for student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- During a teacher team meeting teachers spoke about how they regularly meet in grade and content teams to examine student work using a ten week inquiry based protocol model. The protocol is based on the school's instructional focus, STORM (student to student interaction, textual based evidence to support ideas, ongoing checking for understanding, rigor as aligned to Webb's Depth of Knowledge and multiple entry points) and is aligned to the Common Core and annual school goals. The Principal shared that the infusion of STORM through teacher team practice has strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers. As measured by Measures of Teaching Practice ratings throughout the fall term, the school experienced a 26% increase in teachers rated highly proficient and a 4% increase in those rated proficient. These measurements included both walk-throughs and formal observations of both classes and teacher teams.
- The principal provided evidence and teachers spoke to how best practices shared during team meetings are collected and regularly shared with the entire staff during monthly whole school professional development sessions. An example would be the use of R.A.C.E. (reword, answer, cite and explain), which was originally introduced by the Middle School and 9th grade teams and then shared school wide. An analysis of student work showed that students were struggling in their use of text-based evidence in their writing. Evidence gathered from teachers after the school wide implementation of R.A.C.E. indicated that 80% of students now cited text-based evidence in their writing.
- School leaders and teachers spoke to the various ways the school has implemented distributed leadership structures and given teachers a voice in key decisions. Each teacher team has a teacher facilitator. Through the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), teachers have a voice in decisions regarding professional development. Teachers spoke to how this regular practice of seeking teacher input has been instrumental in providing targeted professional development to staff, often created and facilitated by teachers, on a school, small group and individual basis.
- Teachers also explained how the school has supported teachers in building leadership capacity and voice in key school decisions. For example, teachers commented that they played a very large role in helping to restructure the school schedule this year to ensure additional time for literacy and math support for all students and that their input is continuously sought for ways to improve the new schedule based on student results from these classes. Other examples of teacher voice include the development of a Special Education Handbook and a school wide grading policy.