



**Department of  
Education**

*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Brooklyn Institute for Liberal Arts**

**High School K745**

**600 Kingston Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11203**

**Principal: Ann-Marie Henry-Stephens**

**Date of review: March 12, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Jo Ann Benoit**

## The School Context

Brooklyn Institute for Liberal Arts is a high school with 253 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 93% Black, 4% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 17% 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 94.2%.

## 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>Well Developed</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>Proficient</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 and staff have established a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all. Structures and systems provide support and feedback to teachers, students and families to meet and understand these expectations.

### Impact

The development of a culture for learning has resulted in mutual accountability for high expectations and successful partnerships with families to support student progress towards those expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate and support high expectations to the entire staff. They include: handbook for writing for students and teachers; Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) goal number of 85% teachers to show at least one level of growth in the Framework for Teaching (FFT); teachers starting school one week before others in order to immerse them in the school's expectations; the teams' cycle of inquiry. Teachers are formally observed at least four times a month. Teachers are scheduled to meet with colleagues and are encouraged to participate in inter-visitations.
- Teachers, in turn, support students in meeting expectations during advisory while working on setting SMART goals, sharing and signing class contracts and offering Advanced Placement (AP) classes. All students engage in some form of college preparatory program. Students from grades 9 through 11 work on essays and college choice activities developed by teachers. The school has partnered with College for Every Student (CFES), College Now, Princeton University, Baruch College and Medgar Evers College to offer students college-level experiences. Students receive a syllabus/contract that they sign which helps to clarify the expectations as well as assume responsibility for their work. During advisory, they set and monitor goals for themselves.
- Communication with parents is ongoing and varied to allow them to become partners in their children's' academic careers. Parents are contacted via phone calls, emails, Jupiter grades. Parents are offered workshops on financial aid to help them prepare for college as well. The expectations for student success are shared with them at workshops, during curriculum nights, and through the progress reports and report cards. There is a family handbook and an orientation that is offered to explain the expectations and ways to meet them for parents.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a shared belief about how students learn best. Student discussions reflected high levels of participation.

### Impact

Across classrooms, students were engaged in high levels of student thinking and participation; however, teaching strategies did not provide high quality supports and extensions in order for students to fully own their learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teaching practices are aligned to curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. According to the administrators and the teachers, those practices are grounded in the beliefs that students learn best when they are engaged in discussion and when students work collaboratively. In a U.S. History class, students were working collaboratively to fill out a KWL chart on Prohibition. In Global History class, students were working in groups and reading texts from different perspectives. They then had to share their understanding of the text to the other members of the group from the perspective of their character. In an English class, the students were engaged in a Socratic seminar discussing the *Kite Runner*.
- In all classes visited, students had the opportunity to ask questions of classmates and of the teachers. In a grade11 English language arts(ELA) class reading *Nickle and Dime*, during a whole class conversation students were answering the teacher's prompt, "Challenge or defend the following statement: Employers have a right to give employees drug tests. Offer reasons to support your position." As students were sharing their position, they were also questioning one another and making connections to the text they were reading. One question asked was "Didn't that employee in *Nickle and Dime* go through the same thing [being tested by a third party and getting caught]?" In a science class, as students were studying about ecosystems and food chains, one student asked the class and was able to choose who would answer her question, "Are we a part of this food chain even though we are not fish?" These opportunities allowed students to participate in discussions that reflect high levels of participation and thinking.
- Although students were engaged in whole class and small group conversations, teaching strategies did not provide multiple entry points and high quality supports and extensions into the curricula so all students would be appropriately engaged and ultimately reflect high levels of ownership of the work. Many of the conversations observed were teacher-led or when students were asking questions of one another, those interactions were facilitated by the teachers without resources for students to take ownership of their own learning.

## Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

Coherent curricula promote college and career readiness, tailor tasks so that students can demonstrate their thinking and provide access to all learners.

### Impact

Students are cognitively engaged in Common Core-aligned work that is tailored to their learning needs and they have opportunities to demonstrate their thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- Curricula are aligned to the Common Core and instructional shifts and refined resulting in coherence across grades and subjects. The school has adopted a cycle of inquiry instruction to promote effective learning for all students, the 5 Es: engage, explore, explain, elaborate and evaluate. The school's instructional focus also helps to emphasize skills at different grade levels. Based on student data, the following were agreed upon to support students with the areas they struggle in: in grade 9, students are expected to identify evidence. In grades 10 and 11, they are expected to analyze evidence. Unit and lesson templates ensure that lessons are grounded in the standards, and essential and guiding questions, and learning goals and differentiation are planned.
- Students participate in activities that require them to demonstrate rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills. Sixty six percent of students take Advanced Placement courses. Students also take College Now courses. Students interact with grade level texts and are asked to generate questions about the different topics they tackle throughout the subject areas. The Habits of Mind are also infused in the curricula that are aligned to the instructional shifts. These call for students to "read to infer/interpret/draw conclusions, support arguments with evidence, resolve conflicting views encountered in source documents, and solve complex problems with no obvious answers.
- Based on the plans reviewed, all learners are required with the appropriate scaffolds to demonstrate their thinking. For example, in a US history plan, students read differentiated texts on Prohibition. To allow access for some, one of the texts had some vocabulary words defined in the margins. In a math class, all students were asked to work on measuring exterior angles. Differentiation was planned using different shapes and polygons in varying degrees of complexity.

**Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use and create rubrics and assessments that are aligned with the curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress towards goals.

**Impact**

The data collected from the assessments provide feedback to both teachers and students regarding student achievement. The results from the analyses of common assessments allow teachers to adjust instruction and curricula.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The teachers have created various rubrics, checklists and assessments to provide actionable feedback to them and students. Teachers created a uniform annotation guide that the students spoke about. They adopted and adapted a college essay writing handbook and a general writing handbook as extensive checklists to guide students in the writing process. One of the rubrics created provides both the criteria for the different levels of proficiency in the genre and a list of the items that could potentially weaken the essay. Thus, students not only know what to aim for but what to avoid as well.
- Students spoke about having opportunities to revise their work after feedback is given to them. They are able to use the feedback given to them to make adjustments to their work and resubmit for a revised grade.
- The school uses common assessments to determine student progress. Some of the assessments used to identify trends in data and next steps for teaching and learning are Achieve 3000, Castle Learning, iEXEL, Measures of Student Learning, end-of-unit exams, mock Regents exams. Since the school tracks progress of student goals, they shared that as of the March 2015, 60% of students were already meeting the CEP goal of identifying (9<sup>th</sup> grade) /analyzing (10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades) evidence.
- Across subject areas, teachers use quizzes and exit slips and other assessments to make adjustments to curricula and instruction. In response to data analyzed, teachers make adjustments to curricula and instruction, such as chunking texts, showing a movie as a visual, preparing leveled questions, and/or planning a Socratic seminar around a specific topic so that all students have access.

<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 meet in inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of goals and the implementation of CCLS. Distributive leadership structures are in place at the school

### **Impact**

These professional collaborations help to strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers and provide a forum for them to have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams look at student work and use protocols such as “learning from student work” to identify misconceptions and devise instructional next steps for groups of students. During the teacher team observed, teachers looked at student work in math. One question asked as they were analyzing the data was, “How do we get students to do this mental work instead of telling them what to do?” Some of the suggestions given were to have students write out the equation, ask them to show all interpretations and perhaps identify and scaffold statements with blank spaces so they can fill them out.
- Teachers are active members of the learning community at the school. They develop course work, provide professional development, look at student work, and make adjustments to the curricula and academic tasks. Teachers meet in grade teams, department teams and for weekly staff professional development. Some are Common Core fellows and bring their work with the Common Core back to school to share with colleagues.
- Teachers lead teacher teams and propose extracurricular activities. Teachers facilitate the work in programming, are the leads for special education services and the math department among others. They advise students throughout their academic careers. They propose clubs, such as coding, and classes such as the AP classes. They mentor each other and helped identify the school’s instructional focus.