



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Brooklyn Generation School

High School K566

**6565 Flatlands Ave.
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: Lydia Colon Bomani

**Date of review: March 31, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen**

The School Context

Brooklyn Generation School is a high school with 235 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 87% Black, 9% Hispanic, and 0% White students. The student body includes 6% English Language Learners and 23% students with disabilities. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 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	Celebration	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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Focus	Proficient
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	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	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:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Rigorous habits and higher order skills are coherently emphasized in curricula and academic tasks that are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

All learners have access to cognitively engaging curricula that require them to demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- An algebra lesson plan showed students purposefully grouped by ability as noted by the groups “Getting Started,” “Almost There,” and “Moving Forward.” Student special needs classifications were also cited in the plan. All of the activities in the lesson were tiered according to these groups. In the final activity, all students would have to engage the same word problem and be prepared to discuss and write about their interpretation of graphed inequalities. However, the “Getting Started” group would be provided with an inequality that was already graphed and shaded. The points of inequality would be plotted for the “Almost There” group and they would have to decide whether to draw a solid or dotted line and identify the shaded region, while the “Moving Forward” students would graph an inequality from scratch.
- A science lab lesson plan listed a number of accommodations for student success to be used as needed including relevant terms provided on a word wall, sentence starters, targeted checks for understanding, and extended time. In addition, student specific strategies were also provided. For example, select students would be given a graph with pre-labeled axes to support their work. This Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) lesson also noted that each teacher had supportive roles in working with small, specific ability based groups. The real world task for the lab was for students to serve as party planners who had to justify the ideal time to have a pool party given their understanding of the angle of isolation and after having collected, graphed and analyzed data. Groups that finished early would present their findings for discussion.
- Socratic Seminar was the main activity in a social studies lesson focused on World War II and Independence Movements. According to the lesson plan, to prepare for the seminar, students would be provided with scaffolded versions of the anchor text. Academic language scripts for Socratic Seminar, which provide various examples of questions to clarify, probe for higher-level thinking and build on what others say would be made available during the discussion.
- The lesson documents for an English Language Arts (ELA) course focused on the topic “Superiority View Point of the Self and Society” outlined how students would use evidence from multiple sources, form an opinion, pick a side and engage in a philosophical chair activity. They would be given an opportunity to switch sides in the debate and defend their new position. In addition to primary and secondary sources, students would be provided with articles and video, allowing those of varying reading levels to acquire sufficient evidence to base an opinion on and engage in the debate.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Although the school staff's shared belief in the importance of alignment to the curricula, questioning, writing to learn, discussion and reflection is apparent across classrooms, these practices are not reflected coherently in all classrooms.

Impact

Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation, however student ownership of their learning was not evident in most classes visited.

Supporting Evidence

- An ELA class engaged in a conversation about the idea that all students have the same opportunities to learn and be successful. The teacher encouraged her students to look at the evidence in the text to support their thoughts and feelings on the issue. Students annotated assertions and empirical evidence from the text and wrote them on graphic organizers to support their perspectives in the discussion. One student said, "We're undecided because it's up to the specific individual to use the opportunity they're offered. It's about how you use it." Another responded, "Yeah, we all have the opportunity to go to school, but all schools don't have the exact same materials." A partner from the same group backed up the assertion with information from an article pertaining to the education of Chinese children in 1945.
- During the "half time" of a Socratic Seminar taking place in a social studies class, students within a small group were providing feedback to their teammate that was directly engaged in the debate. Using notes taken on a seminar observation form, they coached with, "Try to ask him how did Hitler's empire last as long as it did," "Try to refer to the text," and "You're doing good on offering new ideas." At one point, after the debate continued, one of the participants claimed that Hitler had conquered England. Another debater asked the student, "Where in the text did you find that?" After his opponent skimmed the text for a few seconds, he added, while pointing to the print, "Here it says that he wasn't able to conquer England so he went to Russia."
- A math lesson also featured a Socratic Seminar as its main activity. A small group of students sat at the front of the room debating the effectiveness and accuracy of a math problem projected behind them. "Since the total yards is ten, you can tell that she solved c and d correctly." Another responded, "I think she was incorrect because the lines that she drew to see how many yards he moved around the football field aren't right." The teacher encouraged students observing and taking notes to support the debate with noticings and comments. She also pushed student thinking with questions such as, "Is this approach a good one?", "Why or Why not?" and "What are the limitations of this approach?"
- In a science class, small groups were engaged in a lab activity. The quality of conversation about the concepts connected to the task varied as some groups only discussed the technical aspects of the work such as graphing. Some struggled to articulate why 12 noon was the optimal time to schedule the party. In such cases, the teacher prompted students to support each other's understanding rather than the students owning that role without intervention.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use and create assessments and rubrics aligned to the school's curricula. In addition, they use commons assessments to determine student progress across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Students and teachers receive actionable feedback regarding student achievement and teachers use this information to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Students spoke clearly about next steps they would take given feedback received on numerous tasks. "I would use supporting details to make my point stronger." Another commented, "I have to come up with level 2 and 3 questions. Level 2 you have to discuss, elaborate and compare. Level 3 you analyze and evaluate."
- Math assessments highlighted that students struggled with writing equations from multiple transformations as well as explaining a minimum for an algebraic representation. The strategic re-teaching plan included a scaffolded performance task that contained a writing activity that integrated the "Because, But" writing framework.
- An analysis of Regents data indicated that students were having difficulty understanding questions and multiple -choice options. Student lack of facility with academic vocabulary such as cause and effect and patterns were found to be a root cause. To address this, teachers planned to align and scaffold academic vocabulary.
- Math data from two consecutive assessments indicated that a number of students exhibited little improvement in their ability to write constructed responses. Teachers decided to use more student-centered strategies to address the issue. One re-teaching planning document stated that students would work individually on problems, and then be provided with five minutes to compare their work with a partner. If they had different answers, they must come to consensus. Another strategy had students collaborating to find the error in a student work sample and agreeing on what was done wrong during each step.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The principal consistently communicates her expectation that teachers implement purposeful questioning and discussion techniques, as well as writing activities during instruction. Teacher teams and staff consistently communicate high expectations and offer ongoing feedback and supports to students.

Impact

Teachers receive training and are held accountable for implementing effective writing, questioning and discussion practices. Students engage in experiences that prepare them for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Observation feedback serves as a key mode of communicating as well as an accountability measure for leadership’s high expectations. Low inference notes from an observation report stated, “There were times during the seminar that students were ‘stuck’ at a question and would revert to level 1 or level 2 questions. In these instances students would look for another stem to continue the conversation but not necessarily with questions that would require high-level student thinking and explanations of their thinking.” A next step for a different teacher was, “For this week, have students practice their writing skills in developing a counterclaim by responding to questions posed in the digital classroom, and by responding to their peers.”
- The staff handbook contains a questioning rubric that aligns Bloom’s Taxonomy with Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* framework. The expectation is that teachers will use the questioning rubric template as part of their planning to develop questions that challenge students and push them to higher levels of inquiry.
- The school’s professional development calendar includes sessions on writing and critical thinking activities as well as investigating topics to develop answers to authentic questions.
- Students reported that their teachers consistently update the on-line grading and communication system so that they are aware of their scores on tests and other assignments, grades in classes, as well as credit accumulation.
- In addition to Brooklyn College’s College NOW and TRiO Education Talent Search programs, the school also partners with Vaughn College, which exposes participating students to the world of aviation. Students spoke of how the school started early in providing information about college such as financial aid and choosing the best college based on what you want to major in. They also noted going on college visits. An overnight upstate New York multi-campus visit provided an opportunity for students to engage in activities and tours across a number of colleges over a two-day period. At the time of this Quality Review, 50% of the seniors had been accepted into four-year colleges.

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

The majority of teachers engage in structured inquiry based professional collaborations that analyze assessment data and student work, while promoting school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards.

Impact

The collaborative work strengthens the instructional capacity of teachers, enabling groups of students to make progress toward goals.

Supporting Evidence

- The ninth grade team was observed in the midst of ongoing work focused on improving students' capacity to write using appositives. They began by norming their assessment of student exit tickets by using a checklist, which identified two targeted skills as well as content and mechanics. Ten students were the foci of the process as checks or x's were written to note whether each student successfully met the criteria. After reviewing a few samples, a teacher asserted, "They are not ready to move on, even though that's what we want." They then spent time determining which type of exit ticket items would best serve student understanding. They all agreed to content specific sentences with appositives to which students could add commas. All team members were clear that they were collectively moving students toward being able to use appositives in topic sentences and thesis statements to set up written arguments.
- Minutes from a math teacher team engaged in an inquiry cycle reflect how they focused their efforts on developing activities around big ideas to deepen students' conceptual understanding. The team attempted to solve select Common Core algebra Regents questions that shared the same topic and identified the unifying big idea, which was graphing real-world events using rate of change. They then brainstormed activities that would support student understanding of this concept. Suggestions included having students create storyboards for each situation in a graph as well as describing graphs in writing that represent real world scenarios.
- A student work protocol guided the meeting of a grade team. A social studies teacher explained the assignment. Teammates then asked clarifying questions and analyzed the task. Teachers noted that the student had to understand sharecropping, analyze a primary source, and answer document-based questions. The samples provided showed that the students annotated text and answered most of the questions. To increase student success on such tasks, the team recommended providing heterogeneous pairs with leveled questions and then have them explain their answers to each other. The notes indicate that the teacher acknowledged the strategies to improve cooperative learning.
- Another grade team analyzed Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) data and identified the following skills to be in need of reinforcement: identifying and discussing counterclaims, and using evidence to support claims. Teachers across content areas agreed to implement a text "Evidence Swap Meet Mini Task." Notes from the meeting where teachers reflected on the impact of the strategy indicate that students were able to arrange evidence from strongest to weakest, make better inferences based on the text, and adjust their arguments to make them stronger.