



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Brooklyn Theatre Arts High School

High School K567

**6565 Flatlands Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: David Ward

**Date of review: December 10, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen**

The School Context

Brooklyn Theatre Arts High School is a high school with 381 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 0% Asian, 82% Black, 13% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 3% English Language Learners and 17% students with disabilities. Boys account for 43% of the students enrolled and girls account for 57%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 84.7%.

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	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 <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	Additional Findings	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	Focus	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:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and teachers ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, State standards, and the instructional shifts. In addition, learning tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits.

Impact

Purposeful decisions build curricular coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Higher order skills are embedded in curricula documents across grades and subjects for all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- The learning standards found in curricula documents include: identify, compare and evaluate multiple perspectives on a given historical experience; investigate, justify and apply the triangle inequality theorem; and cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- A math lesson plan presented a task where students would use straws of different lengths to try to construct triangles. In summarizing the activity, students would be asked to make noticings, comparisons, explanations and a prediction.
- An English Language Arts (ELA) task required students to annotate two articles, discuss them and form their own opinions about the topic.
- The instructional materials for a social studies lesson lead to students having to develop an argument and write a one-page response that incorporates text-based evidence.
- All of the curricula documents reviewed contained opportunities for students to read and/or write.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Common assessments are used to determine student progress across grades and subject areas. Across classrooms, assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Curricular adjustments and instructional decisions informed by assessment data have yet to result in all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, demonstrating increased mastery. Though teachers make effective adjustments, not all students are aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- The interim assessment analysis from a social studies class showed that students were challenged by the ability to support evidence with analysis. One of the instructional next steps based on these findings was to utilize the Introduce, Cite and Explain strategy (ICE).
- The analysis of a science assessment showed that the majority of students that answered an item incorrectly, more than likely did so because they were not facile with content specific vocabulary. As a result, teachers planned to introduce key word lists and weekly vocabulary quizzes.
- Across classrooms, teachers consistently checked for understanding by circulating and asking questions as students engaged in tasks. For example, during a discussion about a piece of literature, a student claimed, "Most people are followers and not leaders." The teacher requested that he provide an example to support his claim. In a math class, after students correctly completed a task, the teacher asked, "So what had to be true to make the triangle?"
- Although most students were able to articulate their next learning steps when asked, when a student was asked how she would improve on a task to earn a four on the rubric instead of a three, she responded, "I don't know. I'd change the way I write." Similarly, when another student was asked what he would do differently to get a better score on a math assignment, he responded that he would go to a teacher for help.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and an articulated set of beliefs. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

All learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in their work.

Supporting Evidence

- In a math class, students were provided with construction paper, straws of varying length, rulers and glue sticks. Pairs of students were observed collaborating in an effort to make triangles. During the process, the teacher posed questions such as, “When you stacked the two smaller sides, what operation did you use?” In some instances, students were successful. Others were given straws that made it impossible to make triangles, yet all students were required to explain in writing why they were or were not able to accomplish the task.
- Students discussed high interest articles that they had annotated in an English class. Students were overheard comparing the two articles, which were about the same incident. One student said, “It seems like they are more on the school’s side than the girl’s side in this article,” as she pointed out text to support her claim. Prompts were provided for those who needed them to complete either one of two summarizing writing tasks. One task asked students to identify one main idea the reporters of the articles wanted the reader to know, and provide evidence from at least one of the articles. The other option was to use supporting evidence from at least one of the articles to write an opinion piece explaining whether the girl who was the focus of both articles should face expulsion from school.
- Upon entering a social studies class, a painted depiction of the Trail of Tears along with the focus question: “Why do people in the 1830’s disagree over the policy of Indian removal?” were projected onto the white board at the front of the room. The class was finishing a discussion regarding the affect of the Indian Removal Act on Native Americans. Students agreed that Native Americans must have felt upset and wronged. After showing a short video on the Trail of Tears, the students began annotating text about the Treaty of New Echota. The text contained one-word definitions in parenthesis following key words that maintained the complexity of the text. For example, ratified was followed by (passed).

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations to families that are connected to a path to college and careers.

Impact

Staff receives training and is held accountable for expectations communicated by the principal and assistant principal. Families understand their children's progress toward the school's high expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- A memo from the principal to the staff highlighted feedback that he had received from the superintendent, which stated, "Highlight effective practices for writing and discussion through your teacher team meetings and professional development in order to develop the instructional capacity of teachers." The same memo also referenced the principal's excitement that the social studies department would begin an inquiry cycle focused on students' thematic essay writing on the Global and U.S. History Regents exams.
- The principal has dedicated weekly professional development time for the entire staff to focus on literacy across the curriculum. During these sessions, departments meet to participate in professional learning on student writing, conduct lesson studies focused on writing, look at student work, and identify practices and protocols that support student writing.
- The school's staff handbook clearly outlines numerous high expectations including: instructional expectations, best practices in questioning and discussion and effective co-teaching practices. One of the instructional best practices is that, "substantial reading and writing should be a part of every day's task in every discipline. Literacy skills must be practiced in every class in order for students to succeed academically."
- Parents, even those who do not access it regularly, had a clear awareness of the on-line communication system that is available to them as well as the information about their children's progress that it shares. "We all have passwords, but I prefer a phone conversation," stated a mother who noted that teachers are very responsive and keep her abreast of her son's academic standing in his classes. "Some teachers provide websites so we can help with assignments," noted another parent. Parents also mentioned that the progress reports that they get every three weeks keep them aware of their children's strengths and weaknesses in school.

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

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

Impact

The instructional capacity of teachers is strengthened as they implement new teaching strategies that result in student growth in writing across subject areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade team interim assessment sheets require that teams record their understanding of students' challenges, as well as instructional next steps and specific strategies. For example, the analysis of New York State Regents aligned interim assessments noted: students are having difficulty reading and following directions; and essays were attempted but not always completed. Next steps included: improving and developing students' short answer response answers and being intentional about reading instructions aloud before having students complete a task. Strategies listed were using document-based questions in lessons, calling on students who volunteer as well as those who do not and asking students to summarize the instructions.
- Teachers spoke about the writing focus of teacher teams and how it has affected their collective practices. "The data was showing that writing is a problem," noted one teacher. "When we debrief with each other we pick strategies that we're going to try like ICE, sentence starters or guided feedback.
- "We've also been looking at how to get our students to read and understand the questions being asked of them," claimed a teacher as she pointed out that her team was implementing annotation techniques into their instruction. Specifically, the 3,2,1 method, which requires students to identify three key words, two important elements in the text and write one question that is based on the text.
- As a result of the departmental focus on increasing literacy, the amount of writing that students do has increased in ELA and social studies classes. In addition, data indicates that students are improving their writing skills about their thinking and task related processes in math and science courses.