



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Millennium Brooklyn High School

High School M684

**237 7 Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11215**

Principal: Kevin Conway

**Date of review: February 11, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Debra Freeman**

The School Context

Millennium Brooklyn High School is a high school with 620 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 9% Asian, 24% Black, 27% Hispanic, and 31% White students. The student body includes 0% English Language Learners and 11% students with disabilities. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 93.9%.

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	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	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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to all staff and provide training and support for reaching them. Teacher teams and staff systematically communicate a unified set of high expectations and provide guidance supports for all students.

Impact

The consistent communication of high expectations results in a culture of mutual accountability and all students, including high-need subgroups, owning their educational experience in preparation for college and career.

Supporting Evidence

- After a series of observations surfaced the need for greater emphasis on student-centered tasks to cognitively engage all learners, school leaders set the school-wide instructional expectations aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. This expectation has taken root, and was abundantly evident across classrooms visited. Additionally, school leaders ensure that all students receive timely feedback to ensure that they are prepared for the next level. Additionally, department chairs ensure that all students are challenged to meet the high expectations set. This includes the Autism Spectrum Disorder Nest program students, whose continuing high performance is a testament to the expectations held.
- All students are expected to earn 57 credits over their four years in the school and have many opportunities to select from the seven Advanced Placement courses offered. Additionally, this year there are 12 new course offerings designed to ready students for the academic challenges they will encounter in college such as Advance Via Individual Information (AVID), Computer Science, and Engineering.
- Students are supported in achieving the school's high expectations in several ways. First, they meet in advisory three times a week to review and reflect upon progress using the online grading platform, and set measurable goals for reaching learning targets. The ensuing student-facilitated conferences with families and advisor are grounded in this reflective process. Second, all teachers hold office hours so that classroom conferring and feedback is extended. Third, as this is the first school to offer a high school-level Nest program, teachers are trained in how to work effectively in the inclusive classroom setting so that all students benefit. Lastly, the school employs two full-time college counselors, a reflection of the value placed on preparing students, as early as ninth grade, for college. The results are that 100% of Millennium graduates go to college.
- School leaders expect all teachers to engage in four intervisitations over the course of the year during which they take low inference notes to capture not what the teacher is doing, but what students are learning. Collegial feedback is grounded in the low inference observations gathered, and this results in teachers holding each other accountable for strengthening school-wide instructional practices. Additionally, school leaders expect to see shifts in instructional practice as a result of the visits, and this was evident across classrooms.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers administer common assessments and have a common grading policy aligned to the school's vision and curricula. Teachers typically check for understanding to make certain students are on task.

Impact

Teachers and school leaders discuss student achievement, and support each other with informative feedback. However, in-class checks for understanding less consistently push students to engage in productive struggle, or lead to instructional adjustments.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal shared that the school's inquiry cycle is driven by assessment data. All departments administer a common baseline assessment and four benchmarks throughout the year. Teams use this data, maintained on trackers, to surface skill gaps and determine appropriate interventions to support students, and to identify instructional adjustments needed. Additionally, school leaders created a standardized grading policy based upon ten homework assignments, two projects, and two exams per quarter. This practice has resulted in 44% of the students earning Advanced Regents diplomas, and, the principal shared, collective improvement in Danielson *Framework for Teaching* 3d: Assessment in Instruction. All school leaders provide actionable feedback to teachers based on student outcomes. Additionally, the school's assessment calendar is decided in grade teams to ensure that exams are scheduled fairly, and provide clarity on due dates for students and families.
- The January humanities department minutes reflect their inquiry cycle focus: "As a department, do we have a shared vision of where we are moving students?" This work proves timely as across classrooms, teachers consistently checked in with students during work time to make certain they were on task and engaged, but in several cases, the check-ins did not include specific feedback or lead to an adjustment to practice that would push student thinking. Instead, questions were often designed to move students to completing a task, or toward a right answer such as "What information will we use?", "What's the equation?" or "Did you include evidence?" In a science class, the teacher went from group to group and posed questions to challenge what students asserted, and this helped them to change their thinking to the teacher's, but not to strengthen their own. Similarly, in a math class the teacher posed single-answer questions, and the lesson plan indicated that to check for understanding, the teacher would "keep students on task with probing questions" and "provide guiding questions when needed."
- Teachers are purposeful in using data to inform adjustments to practice. For example, after administering and analyzing baseline assessment results, the science teachers focused on "assessing what the question is asking" in their lessons, and adjusted their instruction to focus on reading analysis. After each adjustment, student performance increased, and by the second benchmark had done so by at least ten points. However, assessments during classes were less targeted. In an English Language Arts (ELA) class, although the teacher did check in with students, it was unclear what the teacher was assessing. As the principal pointed out, more strategic checks for student understanding would better support students and provide more accurate information for use by the teacher.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

All curricula are strategically aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, embed the instructional shifts, and emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking in tasks.

Impact

School leaders and staff have created a coherent curriculum that promotes college and career readiness, and opportunities for all students to demonstrate high levels of critical thought and cognitive engagement.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's work to redesign curricula to raise rigor and put students at the center of their learning began during the summer retreat. This effort to thoroughly revise all curricula maps to better prepare students for the rigors of college was in evidence in all curricula documents. An economics task requires students to develop a financial plan for a long-term purchase to include a budget, a realistic timeline, what will be saved, spent, invested and paid off, and a narrative to defend the plan using relevant economic terms and concepts. A United States history task requires students to identify a rhetorical device embedded in a historical speech, provide evidence for the effectiveness of its use, and explain its significance. Similarly, English students focus on connecting Mark Twain's use of literary elements or rhetorical devices to the central idea in an excerpt from *Life on the Mississippi*.
- Teachers engaged in identifying reading and writing skills by grade level and subject. For example, math curricula documents highlight reading skills such as annotating, rereading, and identifying relevant information in word problems. Identified writing skills require students to gain proficiency in assessing each other's work for clarity and precision, using appropriate math terminology and symbols. Additionally, from algebra through calculus, students develop their skill in determining the best approach from multiple methods and justifying math reasoning. In humanities, ninth graders engage in close reading, annotation, and developing their own open-ended questions in response to a text. In tenth grade, the focus is on reading from multiple sources to develop claims to defend a position. In the upper grades, students record triple entry notes, begin seeking out resources beyond those provided, and provide peers with feedback on writing.
- The Socratic Seminar structure embedded in humanities curricula builds students' skill in generating open-ended discussion questions that promote divergent and creative perspectives, and strengthen students' ability to build upon or refute text-based theories offered by their peers. Clear in all lesson plans that include this student-led protocol is that students must prepare for the task in advance by formulating questions to pose to peers, and having annotated text passages to refer to during the discussion. One ELA lesson plan also noted that students are expected to switch sides and counter their original position.
- The purposeful work to increase task rigor for all students has had an impact on student performance. Regents pass rates in ELA and United States history, for example, are at 100 and 99%, respectively.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	---	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in professional inquiry cycles that promote the Common Core Learning Standards and strengthen teacher practice. Distributive leadership structures are embedded across the school.

Impact

The culture of professional collaboration results in school-wide instructional coherence, increased student outcomes for all learners, and teachers playing an integral role in key decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- Case conferencing is a hallmark practice of grade teams where teachers discuss the progress for students they share, and determine action steps targeted to student need. In the meeting attended, teachers followed a protocol that is uniform across grade teams. Each staff member is responsible for sharing data from, for example, the online grading platform, data trackers, current course grades, anecdotal information from the advisor or counselor, and overall trends in classroom performance and behavior for a student. Strengths that were noted included strong interaction in groups, increased homework production, and a math thinker, as well as struggles such as uneven class work completion, needs motivation, and does not self-advocate. This resulted in steps to support the student beginning in advisory where the on-line grading platform is studied, and student and advisor set manageable academic goals. This is communicated to all of the students' teachers who collectively hold themselves and the student responsible for making progress. Additionally, in team minutes reviewed, students who receive this targeted support make incremental progress in demonstrating understanding of key concepts, attending office hours regularly, participating voluntarily, and turning in required projects.
- In their December meeting, the research department engaged in a lesson study protocol to provide feedback on a genetic engineering lesson that required students to assess bias, and discern relevance and validity in a research source. The presenting teacher posed a question for the team's consideration, "How can we more effectively teach students how to identify trustworthy sources?" The feedback focused on differentiating the task by varying text levels, creating strategic student groups, and reviewing processes for annotating. The science department minutes highlighted their work to review current laboratory rubrics for similarities and differences in order to create a common rubric for use across grades.
- The school's professional development committee works with school leaders to ensure that the instructional focus is embedded in curricula and practice. The upcoming work is to focus on higher order questioning, and teachers continue to provide each other with written feedback on lessons such as "explain how groups are chosen," "model writing a claim with an explanation of evidence before students begin their writing," or a question to consider, "How are all students held accountable in groups?"
- The school's inquiry cycles follow a common set of procedures from assessing and grading common assessments and identifying what the assessment reveals about what students know or need to gain proficiency in, to maintaining progress on data trackers as a means for monitoring the impact of their instructional interventions.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect the school’s belief in rigorous and student-centered learning. Student work products consistently reflect high levels of student thinking.

Impact

The school aligns teaching practices to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts, which results in high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, students engage in provocative tasks that fully involved them in their own learning. In a humanities class, students closely reread an excerpt from *Julius Caesar* four times in order to deeply unpack the language and interpret the text. They annotated the text each time, and as they reread found more to write. One student noticed that the writer “stops using questions” and wondered “are all of these metaphors?” while another noted that “those with ambition climb up the ladder,” and wondered about the meaning of “bear no colour for the thing he is.” Students engaged with each other in discussion as they recorded three interpretations. Clearly, the more they read, the more they understood the text and the purpose of close reading. To demonstrate what they understood, students responded a fourth time to the question “How does Shakespeare use Brutus’ soliloquy to develop the character?” Students came to an understanding of Brutus’ internal struggle and assessed the level of their understanding at the close of the lesson.
- In a United States history class, students who had previously read *The Jungle* and generated questions about the text, prepared for a Socratic Seminar. They first set an attainable goal for their discussion behavior. The teacher offered the example, “If you dominate, pull back and listen.” Students shared passages from the text, and posed questions to stimulate discussion about the reality of the American dream and whether or not America fulfilled the dreams of immigrants. The students supported their contributions while also paying attention to Sinclair’s use of characterization. One student read a poem for which she saw a connection and quickly pointed out that this did not come from the novel. At the close of the discussion, students reflected on their goals and how well they met them, selected salient points, and recognized a peer. While teachers recorded notes, students took charge of the discussion.
- In preparation for a debate over the efficacy of the use of honor codes in colleges, and whether or not such an idea could work at their school, students read a selection of texts offering differing perspectives. Teams were assigned a position, and collaboratively prepared their argument points. After each team presented, students had eight minutes to come up with rebuttal points, and despite the size of the groups, all students participated and took notes as presenters shared. The note-taking organizer required them to note the claim, data, warrant, possible counters or ways to bolster. Students listened and evaluated the effectiveness of the arguments noting either “didn’t use data” or “clear, organized points.” In the end, students selected the strongest argument and were amply prepared to write essays on the debate using the “Toulmin Method of Argument.”