Quality Review Report
2014-2015

Brooklyn Bridge Academy
High School K578
6565 Flatlands Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11236

Principal: Dr. Max Jean Paul
Date of review: December 3, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Teresa Caccavale
The School Context

Brooklyn Bridge Academy is a transfer high school with 179 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 86% Black, 11% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 21% 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 68.50%.

School Quality Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Culture</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
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<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<tr>
<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Findings
High expectations are systematically conveyed to the entire school community including teachers, students and parents through timely on-going communication, and delivery of effective feedback and guidance supports. School leaders consistently provide training to support the elements of the Danielson Frameworks for Teaching.

Impact
Structures that support high expectations assure a culture of mutual accountability among staff members. As a result of teacher teams’ and staff members’ critical intervention and on-going provision of feedback and advisement, students have ownership over their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence
- Students benefit and persevere from strong partnerships with teachers, school leaders and all members of the school community who consider academic success and performance of learners their central mission.

- Students set goals with teachers and advisors every two weeks after reviewing their bi-weekly assessment reports (BAR) and individualized graduation plans. This collaboration helps students understand the individual focus placed on their education, ensures regular feedback on their progress in accumulating credits, and assists them to understand how each of their current classes help them progress towards graduation.

- Every Wednesday there is an additional advisory period in which each teacher is assigned seven to ten students with whom they meet to re-visit BARS and to set short and long-term goals. This cycle of collaboration between advisors, teachers, and students places the ownership for goal setting on students while providing them with both emotional and academic support.

- Principals and teachers reflect on unit plans and scholarship results regularly. These reviews serve to hold teachers accountable for meeting school expectations. On-going professional development reinforces expectations and creates mutual accountability for school priorities. Each department creates consistent classroom environments that include charts with clear expectations, content and skill based department goals for students, displays of student work and instructional goals, posted essential questions and aims so that students are aware of their own learning process.

- Focus on instructional strategies to increase engagement and mastery has led to students’ increased credit accumulation and success with New York State Regents, resulting in improved graduation rate. Since its inception in 2007, Brooklyn Bridge Academy has successfully graduated over 500 students. In June 2014, 100% of Instruction Support Services (ISS) and English language learner (ELL) students who took the English language arts exam passed or achieved benchmark status (10 out of 10). In the literacy intervention block, an additional targeted intervention for at-risk students, five out of the six students earned 65+, with three testing out of City University of New York (CUNY) remediation courses. Additionally of the 45 students who sat for Regents exams in January 2014, 30 (67%) scored 65 or better.
Findings
While pedagogy, anchored in common beliefs, provides consistent instructional supports, including scaffolds and questioning, the use of strategic extensions that foster higher order thinking demonstrated in rigorous student work and discussions varies across classrooms.

Impact
While, across classrooms, multiple access points support student engagement in rigorous tasks, supports and extensions are not always strategically planned, so that all learners, including English language learners (ELLS) and Students with Disabilities (SWDs), have opportunities to be highly engaged and demonstrate critical and analytical thinking.

Supporting Evidence
- Across all classrooms there was evidence of clear teaching points and lesson planning aligned to the workshop model. In most classrooms teaching strategies included teachers using and requiring students to use academic and subject specific vocabulary. However, in some classrooms, lessons did not strategically provide multiple entry points and high quality supports and extensions into the curricula for all learners to yield student work products reflective of the expectations and rigor of the curricula. In some cases, differentiation cited in lesson plans did not target ELLS or SWDs specifically. For example, power points were cited as a differentiation for visual learners, exchanging papers and peer editing was cited for tactile learners and students’ discussion in triads was cited as differentiation for audio learners.

- In a United States Government class, students were asked to “read like detectives” to gain a clear understanding of the content of President Jackson’s Indian Removal Policy from his annual message of 1830. Students were asked to read, analyze, and discuss the original text identifying what was explicitly stated, draw logical inferences and demonstrate their understanding by writing a succinct summary with textual evidence of support. Similarly, in a science class, students applied skills of mathematics, science, and technology calculating and analyzing their ecological footprints to make informed decisions on how to reduce impacts associated with resource consumption. Students also exchanged papers to peer-edit in order to receive feedback to improve their writing.

- Across classrooms, students had structured opportunities to engage in tasks on their own or with their peers to build critical thinking skills through an intense focus on reading comprehension, extended writing, and “quick writes”. In some classrooms, however, tasks are still heavily scaffolded and teacher-directed, hindering student independence and ownership. For example, in an Algebra class, although the lesson plan stated that students would be given tasks on varying levels of difficulty to apply equations for solving real world problems, the teacher dominated the lesson, focusing on one problem so that there were few opportunities for students to turn and talk and to work independently on problems that offer extension into more academically challenging material.
Additional Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
All curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Curricula and academic tasks are revised using student work and data to support diverse student needs.

Impact
The schools curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all learners. Across subjects teachers make intentional decisions to emphasize key standards and target students’ areas of weaknesses and promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence
- The school uses a uniform school-wide template to create unit plans that include the New York State content standards and CCLS, the school’s BAR objective, essential questions, literacy and differentiation strategies, vocabulary, content knowledge, language and performance skills, and assessments and reflection activities.

- Curriculum revisions and refinements take place three to four times a year. The school examines course offerings and curriculum so that they can tailor their program and curriculum to the needs of students.

- The entire school focuses on the CCLS instructional shift of writing from sources to support students in making claims that are supported with textual evidence. For example, in the Social Justice and Student Voice course students develop and strengthen their writing by revising, editing, and focusing on what is most significant for specific purposes and audiences. Similarly, in science, students examine and convey complex ideas and concepts in writing assignments that require them to analyze content and to select and organize information effectively from data culled from research, using texts, tables, and graphs.

- The school uses the ATLAS-Learning protocol for analyzing student work to identify and examine low inference observations to inform revision of curricula and tasks. Teachers discuss student thinking, standards that students are required to know, and the evident gaps that need to be addressed. This information is then used to refine curricula and create academic tasks that offer differentiated access so that the school’s overage and under-credited student population is cognitively engaged in their learning.
### Findings
The vast majority of teachers engage in inquiry work systematically analyzing the impact of teacher practice and strengthening leadership roles. Teacher teams play an integral role in key school decisions and are currently expanding their work, and deepening their study of the needs of individual students.

### Impact
The work of teacher teams’ results in teacher leadership throughout the school, and deep understanding of the instructional practices that impact student learning, and gains for students on Regents exams. Teams are deepening their focus in using data at a granular level for individual students and aligning instructional strategies that yield outcomes where the majority of students are achieving the necessary gains to move their overall performance to mastery of standards.

### Supporting Evidence
- The school’s focus on building teacher capacity through job-embedded professional development structures such as common planning time has promoted implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Each department has an action plan and utilizes the Danielson framework to dissect and analyze the components to achieve the expectations for each category. The instructional framework is focused on preparing students to become well-educated and contributing members of society.

- During teacher team meetings item analysis of the New York State Regents, formative assessments and BARs leads to revision of the curriculum. This backwards-planning method allows for the breakdown of the content-based academic skills necessary for students to be successful.

- All staff plays a critical role in decision-making concerning curriculum, instruction, school climate, professional development, and school policies on personnel, discipline and program design. Teachers and youth advisors collaborate consistently to share information about student performance, including academic progress, attendance behavior supports and social development, improving student academic and social learning across the school.

- Across teams, all teachers are able to articulate the instructional focus of deepening their understanding of students through the collection and analysis of data, to improve instruction and curriculum units to ultimately improve student-learning outcomes. During the science team’s meeting, teachers tracked data to identify skills demonstrated in students’ writing in order to make decisions about what learning targets needed to be addressed during the current unit of study. Teachers developed a targeted rubric of departmental strategies to specifically support the needs of individual writers including proficient, developing, and underdeveloped writers. For example, proficient writers currently focus on supporting their thesis by making analogies and exploring use of synonyms to enrich writing. Similarly, developing writers are focusing on better supporting their thesis cohesively in developing paragraphs and in increasing their use of academic vocabulary. Science teachers’ use of an Excel tool to track students’ progress in specifically targeted writing skills has led to students’ increased mastery in science writing assignments.
Findings
Teachers use common assessments aligned to curricula in all subject areas and consistently track student progress, however effective use of ongoing checks for understanding varies across classrooms.

Impact
The school’s use of assessment analysis results in actionable feedback to students, in refinement of curricula and monitoring students’ progress, yet day to day adjustments to lessons sometimes miss opportunities to meet all students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence
- Formative assessments are implemented to monitor students’ progress toward mastery of course content. These assessments include the school’s bi-weekly BAR assessments, which are aligned to the CCLS, academic goals, and Regent goals. Informal assessments include quick writes, quizzes, projects, and unit exams. Teachers use these assessment results and student work samples to make informed decisions in adjusting curricula and instruction and enact early action plans for students not making progress. Summative assessments, including Regents exams, are also used to inform instruction.

- Classroom visits and meetings with teachers indicated that the school uses ongoing assessments to group students and adjust lesson plans as well as provide feedback on student work including next steps. Students say that teachers confer with them and give them strategies on how to improve their work. However, classroom visits also indicated that teachers across the vast majority of classrooms do not always fully utilize checks for understanding to make immediate adjustments in daily lessons. For example in one math class most students had quickly completed a problem correctly but the teacher still gave a lengthy explanation to the entire class. Similarly, in a science class observed, the teacher did not accurately assess that most students understood the task. The teacher dedicated a great deal of lesson time to explanation and introduction before sending students to work independently, thereby minimizing independent work time and opportunities for students, particularly for higher achieving students, to engage in rich, high-level thinking and discussion with peers.

- On-going teacher checks for understanding and student/staff conferences regarding results of bi-weekly assessments ensure that teachers make effective instructional adjustments. In particular, teachers are changing how they communicate with students by de-emphasizing generalized explanations of content, concepts, and student performance. Instead, they are placing emphasis on providing students with very specific feedback that translates into detailed conversations about learning and about new tasks to improve outcomes for all students.