Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Brooklyn High School for Law and Technology

High school 16K498

1396 Broadway
Brooklyn
NY 11221

Principal: Vernon Johnson

Dates of Review:
November 1, 2016 - November 2, 2016

Lead Reviewer: Carlos Perez
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Celebration to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Focus to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as Additional Finding. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

Brooklyn High School for Law and Technology serves students in grade 9 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td></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 Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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<tr>
<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 Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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**3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations**

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<tr>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

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<th>Area</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
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**3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community**

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**4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection**

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<tr>
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**4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning**

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<tr>
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**5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS**

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Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 1.3 Leveraging Resources | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

School leaders make strategic organizational decisions in an effort to support school instructional goals and the educational and the socioemotional needs of students. The use of staff time is setup in a way that allows teachers to meet regularly to focus on instructional work.

Impact

Decisions for the implementation of school resources are done in a collaborative manner, which has led to meaningful student work products that are preparing students for college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Students are presented with opportunities to produce meaningful work products and explore careers through courses such as Filmmaking Production, which introduces students to the world of filmmaking and video production. Students explore careers like film producer, film director, cameraman/woman, lighting director, sound recorder, clapper, production assistant, segment interviewer, and talent (actor/actress). Students also learn how to edit video productions such as adding backgrounds to a video piece that was recorded using a green screen background. Students are able to complete this using the Mac computer lab available to students.

- Teaching staff take part in ongoing professional development at the New York City Department of Education Field Support Center. Staff are participating in ongoing Restorative Practices trainings and turnkey those practices to other colleagues and all students in the building. Furthermore, recent additions to the professional staff include an additional guidance counselor and a part-time dean to give students additional support.

- Staff time is arranged so that teacher teams have numerous opportunities for inquiry sessions and attendance at on-site professional development sessions. Time is designated specifically on Tuesday afternoons and during the school day for grade and subject team inquiry meetings and to address additional needs of the school. As an example, grade five teachers meet during the day on Fridays to help with the implementation of the school's Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: Developing |

Findings
Teaching strategies offered some multiple entry points into the curricula. Classroom discussions and responses reflect uneven levels of rigor, student thinking, and participation.

Impact
Teacher practice is beginning to engage students in challenging tasks. Levels of rigor and questioning strategies are demonstrated unevenly, thus, student participation and interaction at high levels is beginning to take form.

Supporting Evidence

- During a math lesson which focused on transformation called a translation, some students were engaged and could present their work by displaying it on the whiteboard, however not all students fully explained the process used to solve the equations they constructed. Therefore, there was limited amount of discussion amongst peers as students were not able to discuss and evaluate each other's work products. In addition, some students were not on task in the lesson and therefore did not take part in any form of discussion or application.

- In an English Language Arts (ELA) class students were asked to sit in groups and read an excerpt from *Jekyll and Hyde* and then work to answer questions using a rubric. Students showed an interest in the reading and during the lesson some students were actively engaged sharing their thinking. However, others students were not able to share different strategies they used when answering the questions.

- During a Global History class, students were asked to analyze and respond to four different images pertaining to the Haitian Revolution. During the lesson students annotated and responded to each other through writing and made inferences regarding the images provided. However, some students were not actively engaged, as they were not able to communicate in writing. Some students were unclear and asked, “What are we writing about?” Thus, all students were limited from engaging in meaningful class discussions around the assigned task.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum  
Rating: Proficient

Findings

Unit plans and lesson plans are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, there is an integration of the instructional shifts, and curricula include analysis and critical thinking skills across grade levels and subject areas.

Impact

A review of unit plans and lesson plans shows alignment to Common Core Learning Standards and the embedding of critical thinking skills across subjects and grades for all students including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs).

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans reviewed included differentiation for students with disabilities and ELLs, higher-order thinking questions, do now, Common Core Learning Standards, learning objectives, materials needed, assessments, vocabulary, and summary and reflection. For example, in an Earth Science lesson students were asked to explain the variety of organelles found inside the body and compare that structure to that of a city’s department services. This lesson grouped students and assigned a leader/facilitator to each group. The lesson also included tiered assignments, the use of graphic organizers, guided prompts, sentences starters, and visual aids for students with disabilities and ELLs. This lesson also addressed components of the Common Core Learning Standards, specifically the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain specific words and phrases, and gathering relevant information using a variety of sources.

- To incorporate the school’s shift of working towards improving literacy in all areas and grade levels annotation has become a structure that the principal expects to see in every lesson and lesson plan as a way to build college and career readiness. For example, in a Global History lesson the learning objective was to be able to analyze and annotate a text, specifically focused on the Indus River Valley Civilization and identify trends in student annotations by having small group discussions. The teacher also asks students who do not understand something they have read, to annotate it as a reminder and then ask them about it later in the lesson. In a chemistry lesson plan, students were to read and annotate a text about the development of the atom. Students were then to discuss their readings and findings in small groups, come to a consensus, and draw an atom diagram representing the idea of the scientist about whom they read.

- In the school’s social studies curriculum evidence of differentiation includes grouping students, using PowerPoint and video-based assessment tasks and graphic organizers. The school’s science curriculum addresses differentiation by adjusting questions to various student levels, using anchor activities, cubing, flexible groupings, use of rubrics, scaffolding, think-pair-share, and tiered instruction.
Findings
The school has common assessments and grading policies that are loosely aligned to the school’s curricula. Across classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices unevenly reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact
School leaders are working towards developing a clear understanding of student progress towards goals across all grade levels and subject areas. In the classroom, there is unevenness in the use of checking for understanding.

Supporting Evidence

- During classroom visits, lessons included the use of exit tickets, ongoing questioning strategies, and teachers circulating the classroom. For example, in a chemistry class the teacher actively circulated the classroom, assessing and addressing each group and individual students. The teacher assisted students with their presentation skills by stating, “Practice your presentation skills like you are the teacher, remember to be clear and precise about your information.” However, in other classes gauging student understanding and adjusting the lesson accordingly was not evident. In a math class, some students were not engaged or on task and these issues were not addressed.

- In one classroom where student work was displayed a teacher wrote, “Good work, if you could next time let’s put it into your own words.” For a second student, the teacher wrote, “Great work, not an easy task, and you killed it. Let’s move forward and start putting this into your own words.” In a United State History class, some evidence of teacher feedback read “Great job of explaining the articles and what was stated……I would explain how – you could have used outside information from the class such as taxes and mercantilism, this would have added to the argument.” Another example of teacher feedback in this class is, “You used our class as the example which was very clever! The only thing I would work on is remembering to cover all parts of the preamble, for example the part about defense you could have said something like ‘create a safe classroom etc.” However, overall, across classes there were uneven quantities of meaningful comments. For example, comments provided to students who received a three and a half out of four stated, “There are clear relevant and extended definitions of key concept/vocabulary. One key supporting and/or related information is not evident.”

- In another class teachers conferred with students and groups by circulating the room. It was clear there were some student misunderstandings; however, this did not give way to in-the-moment lesson adjustments to address the misunderstandings.
## Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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### Findings
The school communicates high expectations to all staff and students. Teacher teams and staff are establishing a culture for learning that offers guidance/advisement supports that prepare students for the next level.

### Impact
The high expectations communicated to staff, students, provide a route for staff to be accountable, for students to elevate their academic achievements and have access to college and career readiness, and for families to be involved in their children's education.

### Supporting Evidence

- At the beginning of the school year administration shares and discusses the yearlong expectations and goals with the entire staff and student body. Additionally, the school's mission and vision are posted throughout the building. Further, it is an expectation that the school's goals are also shared, discussed, and revisited regularly, with students in the classrooms. In addition, there are monthly grade assemblies run by the grade level guidance counselors and administration where instructional goals are discussed in detail. A schedule of daily informal and formal observation and classroom visits developed by school leaders further ensures teachers meeting the yearlong pedagogical expectations. Administration provides teacher-to-teacher professional learning opportunities by encouraging and allowing intervisitations among the educational staff within the building across all grades and subject areas.

- Students shared that they feel their principal always communicates high expectations especially with respect to college. One student shared that he has attended trips to Howard University, Morgan State, and Georgetown University. This student felt that trips to these schools showed just how high their principal’s expectations are as trips like this help students decide which colleges they might want to apply to and gives students a good idea of what life is like on a college campus.

- School administration is using various systems to communicate high expectations for all students with respect to preparing them for the next level. Systems include letters to parents, phone calls, emails, PupilPath, and workshops for parents and students dealing with areas such as federal student financial aid and the college application process. During the financial aid workshops, parents have an opportunity to learn about the free application for the student-aid process and can use the schools computers to complete the process online. These and all other workshops are offered in various languages including English, Spanish, and Hattian Creole.
Findings

Distributive leadership structures are in place to build leadership capacity among staff. The majority of teachers engage in collaborative inquiry teams that work to promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards.

Impact

Collaborative teacher teams that meet regularly have resulted in opportunities for teachers to share best practices and examine student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- During teacher meetings, staff engages in lesson studies, student data analysis, and curriculum development/revision. The principal shared that last year there was no consistency in tenth grade global history and as result of grades and subject areas beginning to meet, this year all unit and classroom lesson plans are completely aligned. The social studies department looked at last year’s Regents scores and concluded that more work was needed in student writing. As a result, the department has made a push to annotate text in every lesson. The principal also shared that teachers in the math department are using Datalink to apply error analysis for student work that will help lead group discussions among colleagues during team meetings and in classes to assist students with areas in which they require additional attention.

- During the team inquiry meeting teachers shared how they have a voice in the creation of their team’s meeting agenda. Agendas are emailed to every group member so they can add items that they would like to speak about during their meeting. Furthermore, during this meeting it was evident that every group member has a role, such as timekeeper and/or note taker. Minutes taken for each meeting are shared with all team members via email and information and/or data from this meeting will be used to adjust lesson plans to help address student deficiencies.

- The math teacher team observed, analyzed, and discussed data from a pre-assessment administered earlier in the year. In addition, teachers analyzed a second assessment that followed the pre-assessment. During this meeting, several teachers shared that they believed students are struggling most with word problems and translating math problems into words. Another teacher shared that he found students are not annotating the text in the word problems, as evidenced in samples of student work that was shared. A teacher posed the question “Why do you think the students are not annotating?” Teachers shared that they believe it is because students think that since it’s “math,” they do not need to annotate. Thus, the math teachers decided that they needed to dedicate some time to reading comprehension in their lessons to help students with the literacy component and annotation of the math problem.