Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Brooklyn Generation School

High School 18K566

6565 Flatlands Ave.
Brooklyn
NY 11236

Principal: Lydia Colon Bomani

Dates of Review:
May 22, 2017 - May 23, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Thomas McKenna
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


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<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>Well Developed</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

*To what extent does the school...*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>Area of Celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>Additional Finding</td>
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</table>

### Systems for Improvement

*To what extent does the school...*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<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>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<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 Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Findings
The school’s theory of action incorporates personalized interventions, shared cultural expectations, opportunities for meaningful student voice, and a coherent schoolwide approach to supporting positive student behaviors. School structures are in place that allows each student to be well known to at least one adult.

### Impact
A schoolwide culture of both mutual trust and positive attitudes perpetuates a safe and inclusive environment that results in the academic and personal growth of students and adults.

### Supporting Evidence

- Student leaders are nominated by staff and peers to vet administrative decisions and communicate to peers through classroom presentations and town halls. Student leaders also organize student meetings and have presented petitions to school leaders. During the 2016-17 school year, the staff engaged in *Courageous Conversations about Race*. The staff examined Online Occurrence Reporting System incident data, student promotion and retention data, the administrative team embarked upon unpacking data through an equity lens, focusing on race and educational achievement. This is ongoing work in which all staff is engaged, and has informed a schoolwide re-examination of classroom pedagogy, curricular decisions, and student engagement and discipline practices. As a result, this year the school has seen schoolwide improvements such as a 30 percent increase in the percentage of students with 90 percent or better attendance, as well as impact on subgroups. For example, the school has seen 15 percent gains in credit accumulation for the lowest third of students and a 10 percent increase in the graduation rate for Black and Latino students.

- The school grade teams and the Wellness team collaborate to discuss the needs of specific caseloads of students using a “Kid Talk” protocol, to help meet student need in the classroom and to communicate with families with a cohesive voice. The Wellness team, comprised of the school guidance counselor, three social work interns, and the school's program director, and the Pupil Personnel Committee (PPC) assess student need and provide counseling, crisis intervention and other non-classroom based supports where appropriate. This year the teams identified two subgroups needing particular attention, focusing on the males in Cohort T and students who are chronically absent. In addition, student attendance monitoring through weekly attendance meetings by the attendance team and the principal’s cabinet has led to recommended Wellness team interventions that have resulted in an increase in average student attendance to over 90 percent.

- Students report that teachers have created a sense of belonging for them in the school. According to one student, and reflective of the comments made by many students interviewed, “Teachers here know our challenges and recognize them, and they still make us feel welcome no matter what.” According to staff, this sense of belonging is an end result of their multi-year work on increasing student persistence and engagement through teachers consistently demonstrating knowledge of the individual students they serve. This knowledge of students informs a highly personalized approach to every student that is based on need assessments and is reflected in facets of instruction and supports from students programming to college counseling. This schoolwide focus on specific academic and personal behaviors has contributed to a 5 percent increase in overall graduation rates and a 10 percent increase in post-secondary enrollment for students.
Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with curricula as tools for giving clear feedback to students. In addition, teachers’ assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

The school’s assessment practices provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Most teachers’ assessment practices result in effective instructional adjustments during classroom instruction, but some missed opportunities to provide actionable feedback or use assessments to adjust instruction were observed.

Supporting Evidence

- Administration and teachers reported, and demonstrated through planning documents, a focus on the development of formative lesson/unit assessments as well as summative assessments tied to the curriculum maps, so that teachers and students have a clearer sense of expectations. The assessment documents produced are aligned to the curriculum, Common Core Learning Standards, and the school grading policy and reflect common rubric language. Examples of the checklists and rubrics used were posted on classroom walls, hallway bulletin boards, and within student work portfolios. The grade ten math Socratic seminar evaluation rubric for participants notes justifying answers with evidence, summarizing points of view, and making new connections. An essay-writing rubric used across classes is identical to the Common Core writing rubric. Feedback to students based on rubrics is actionable in most cases. However, some examples of feedback are not personalized or meaningful. For example, feedback such as “Your answers showed a basic understanding,” and “I don’t understand your sentence here, can you rephrase it?”

- During a student meeting, students came to a quick consensus when reporting on the use of assessments and rubrics with regard to written assignments and clarity around students’ attainment of mastery. Students reported and shared in conjunction with their work samples, using detailed rubrics with comments that include written feedback with next steps from teachers. An additional step in the feedback process for some student work reviewed calls for the students to provide some written reflection on their work. Students report using other strategies, including a Record-Collaborate-Revise protocol, to self-assess and monitor their own progress. However, in two out of nine classes no adjustments to instruction were observed after collecting data from student self-assessments.

- Across classrooms, the use of checks for understanding for both in-class adjustments and planning were evident. Several classes used exit slips and teachers spoke to using that data for next day’s student groupings, pacing adjustments, or individual supports. Several observed teachers referenced the previous day’s exit tickets in their do nows and opening activities. A majority of teachers were observed conferencing with table groups to assess the level of understanding in the class. For example, a grade nine English Language Arts (ELA) teacher conferred with small groups of three students at a time to ask, “What advice or criticism would Machiavelli offer to Macbeth?” When two groups showed confusion, the teacher regrouped the whole class to review the specific selections from Machiavelli that were relevant to the lesson. However, in two classes there were varying levels of student checks. One Earth science teacher, after a mini-lesson, asked “Anyone have any questions on how we do this?” When no students responded, the teacher moved on. An ELA teacher cold-called students when reviewing the prior lesson on Romanticism, relied on one student to answer five out of nine questions, thus leaving a majority of the class silent.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
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Findings

Through curriculum team and teacher team inquiry work there are coherent curricula across grades that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, integrate the instructional shifts, and emphasize higher-order skills.

Impact

The school’s instructional philosophy, including an emphasis on rigor and coherent literacy and numeracy strategies, are reflected consistently in teachers’ unit and lesson plans, thus promoting college and career readiness and ensuring that all learners demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The stated instructional philosophy of the school that informs and focuses planning is the shared belief and understanding that students learn best if they are actively engaged in student-centered lessons that are focused on understanding and are reflective. Teacher leaders work with their colleagues to integrate a consistent set of common teaching and learning strategies within the practices of questioning, discussion, writing to learn, and reflection/assessment, all of which are tie back to the instructional philosophy. For example, planning documents showed that teachers often use the Question Formulation Technique (QFT) at the beginning of a unit and then a Bloom’s Taxonomy or a Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questioning template is incorporated when planning lessons, both of which are methods to support deep questioning, emphasize rigor, and support students in showing their thinking. All plans also contained planned opportunities for student to share their QFT responses, either in small groups, pairs, or in a whole class format.

- Administrators and staff note that teachers review curriculum and design lessons to align plans with the school’s instructional philosophy, which includes an emphasis on rigorous habits and higher-order thinking in academic tasks. Teachers are working with a variety of curricular sources, which include home-grown curriculum maps that have been aligned with the Common Core over time, EngageNY modules, New Vision Social Studies Curriculum, and New Vision Science Curriculum. Teachers review and revise these materials to meet the needs of the diverse learners in their classrooms. They use formative and summative assessments to gauge the success of the plans and revise as necessary paying careful attention to instructional shifts throughout this continuous improvement process. For example, math lessons include a component on constructing viable arguments to critique the reasoning of others, which is planned for in the form of a Socratic seminar in order to address student misconceptions and support their findings and leading to deeper understanding. ELA lessons, including separate lessons on Nathaniel Hawthorne and George Orwell, featured components focused on using evidence from text to support both class discussions and written tasks.

- Evidence shows strategic examples of the infusion of instructional shifts in curricular documents. For example, in ELA, social studies and science documents, clear planning is evident, incorporating shift 3 – the Staircase of Complexity and shift 4 – text based answers, demonstrating a strategic cross-discipline approach to implementing the shifts. A review of lesson plans shows that in ELA, in addition to shifts 3 and 4, a focus on shift 5 – Writing from Sources is evident across multiple grades.
Additional Finding

**Quality Indicator:**

| 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Proficient |

**Findings**

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula, reflect the school's instructional philosophy, and foster higher-order thinking. Observed teaching strategies provide multiple entry points into the curricula for all learners.

**Impact**

Instructional practices ensure that all students are engaged in rigorous curricula and have opportunities to demonstrate their thinking while producing meaningful work products.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School administrators and teachers report that during the Summer Institute and again at mid-year professional development, the administration reinforced the school’s instructional philosophy and common teaching and learning strategies to increase instructional coherence and consistency. This coherence was observed across classes, with a schoolwide focus on questioning in all content areas. Several classes were engaged in Socratic seminars. A grade twelve economics class engaged in a Socratic seminar based on research on urban food deserts in low-income urban centers. Students were observed managing the entire discussion process, making text to text and text to self-connections, using accountable talk, and citing evidence from the text for all claims. Students outside the circle used worksheets to critique other students in the circle and had opportunities to propose new questions for the group.

- The school’s common beliefs around questioning, discussion, writing to learn, and reflection and assessment practices are observable in most classes. For example, in a grade ten Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) science class, students engaged in an experiment with a penny and levels of acid. Students were asked to create three open-ended and three closed questions to explain the experiment using the school’s QFT. Additionally, students were observed in a grade nine ELA class engaged in a QFT activity at the start of a new unit. Students could speak to the difference between closed and open questioning and were able to actively produce multiple questions on the topic at hand as an extended thinking activity. Students also explained that at the end of each unit they would return to these questions and answer them. This question creation technique was observed in multiple classes and students could speak to the practice.

- Classes were observed forming student groups based on ability or content focus as specified in plans. Scaffolds included differentiated worksheets, graphic organizers, and individualized conferencing and questioning techniques. For example, a grade ten global studies teacher referred several students to the class vocabulary wall and anchor charts. A grade eleven ELA teacher incorporated a learning walk through the classroom to review examples from a prior similar assignment to prepare students with clear models for their new task.
Additional Finding

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

The school leadership team consistently communicates high expectations and supports teachers in meeting those goals. In addition, there is a culture for learning in which students benefit from consistent feedback and advisement aligned to a unified set of high expectations.

**Impact**

There is a culture of mutual accountability around meeting high expectations. Students demonstrate ownership of their educational experience.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Through the staff handbook, classroom observation feedback, staff meeting agendas and professional development sessions, the administration articulated expectations of teachers including a need to be committed to their specific students (through advisory), to have rigorous expectations for all students, and to engage in reflective practice based on both student performance and administrative and peer feedback. In support of creating a culture of mutual accountability, agendas and meeting minutes show that the administration and teacher leaders reviewed data from past years to set clear culture goals for the current school year, including incorporating restorative justice language across the school and setting clear roles for both staff and school leaders. The work between administrators and teachers in this review of data led to a decision to implement a series of professional conversations around race in order to ensure that there was a shared belief around creating a culturally appropriate environment. All teachers interviewed spoke to incorporating language to de-escalate conflict and tension in their classroom management and an increased awareness of approaching student situations in a non-confrontational manner.

- Students are expected to attain a minimum achievement level of 85 percent in all classes and assignments. This motto of Base 85 aligns both staff and students to the belief that beyond passing classes and getting through high school, students and staff need to push themselves to ensure students achieve excellence and are college ready in each discipline. In interviews, all students responded that Base 85 is the rule of the school and what they strive for. One student responded, “A 65 is not good enough for BSG, and it’s not good enough for me.” Several students shared work products that had gone through multiple levels of revision and spoke to that culture of revision and improvement being continually impressed upon them by teachers. For example, several essay drafts showed teacher comments noting where more elaboration and detail was necessary, as well as for the addition of textual evidence. Later versions of the essays showed students incorporating that feedback and improving on the quality of their work.

- All students in the school are part of the BGS College Preparatory Academy (CPA). The college and career director partners with grade teams, students, the parent coordinator, community school director and families to support students in meeting expectations for college exploration and enrollment for every student. CPA introduces all students to the “Four Year Conversation,” which is a planned series of conversations about how students will succeed in high school and matriculate into college prepared to be successful. There are structures and goals for all mandatory conversations that follow, differentiated by grade and time of year, and tracked through checklists and anecdotal notes. The director also runs the Youth Leaders program, which identifies and supports students to be college and career ambassadors for the rest of the student body and to take an active part in planning and directing college- and career-related activities. As a result, 50 percent of graduates in 2016 enrolled in college after graduation, an increase from 37 percent the prior year.
## Findings

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations both in content areas and at the grade level. Teachers report being empowered to positively affect student learning through embedded structures such as team leaders.

## Impact

Collaborations within grade and departmental inquiry teams have strengthened teachers’ instructional capacity, resulting in schoolwide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners. In addition, distributed leadership practices are an embedded part of school culture, including in key decisions that affect student learning.

## Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teacher leaders, including team leaders, model teachers, and department leaders, are able to identify distributed leadership practices and structures that are deeply rooted in the school’s day-to-day operations and articulate how these structures foster a culture in which teacher leaders provide continual input into strategic decisions that affect student achievement. For example, grade team leaders are facilitating their teams to identify common content and skills and to develop grade-level teaching strategies and practices to improve coherence and consistency. Model teachers support the development of grade-level strategies and practices through visitations and teacher reflection on the high leverage strategies that the staff has previously identified. They continue to identify high leverage strategies around assessment, model these, and then work with administration and colleagues to support the most effective practices schoolwide. For example, baseline writing assessments modified for every content area were implemented this year, and model teachers assisted in supporting non-humanities teachers in aligning writing assessments.

- Grade team leaders facilitate the work of the team of teachers working with the same group of students. This team facilitates daily common planning time as they focus on rigorous instruction, family engagement, collaborative teaching, and review student data. Grade team leaders meet weekly with the principal to facilitate communications from the administration to the team. Content team leaders facilitate meetings across grade levels to vertically align curriculum and tasks, and inform decisions about professional development needs. School administrators meet regularly with teacher leaders to establish goals and check on progress. Teachers attribute the school’s rise in attendance, credit accumulation, and graduation rates for the lowest third of students to the focused work of teams. Over the past three years, the four-year graduation rate has increased from 50 to 66 percent in 2016, and early indicators point to a schoolwide graduation rate near 80% for 2017. The four-year graduation rates for ELLs has increased from 50 to 86 percent over the same time period, while the graduation rate for Black and Latino males has increased 13 percent.

- Grade teams have a set of deliberate activities they schedule into their meeting time including the continuous review of unit and lesson plans to align with Common Core and assessing student work to review teacher practice. The work of these teams has led to school-wide instructional coherence. For example, across all subject areas students are engaged in a Read-Collaborate-Review process in which students read, answer questions or respond to prompts, and then reflect and revise their written work with peers. In addition, Socratic Seminars are a common instructional practice across all classes in the school. Seminars in both ELA and math classes were observed, reflecting a common framework and approach. A grade nine team consisting of ELA, math, special education, and social studies teachers analyzed student-writing focusing on math students. A key learning in the meeting was the need to revise algebra-related sentence starters in creating scaffolds for struggling writers. Teachers credit the coherent instructional practices across the school, especially more closely aligning math instruction to practices in other content areas, to the 8% increase in student performance on the Algebra Regents.