Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Brooklyn Theatre Arts High School
High school 18K567
6565 Flatlands Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11236

Principal: David Ward

Dates of Review:
October 17, 2017 - October 18, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio
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 Theatre Arts High School 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>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>Developing</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>Developing</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>Developing</td>
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## School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
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## Systems for Improvement

<table>
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<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<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>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<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>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Developing</td>
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<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>
<td>Developing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 1.4 Positive Learning Environment | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings
The school’s approach to culture building incorporates supportive structures and programs while emphasizing professional development, family outreach, and student learning experiences that build a growth mindset.

Impact
A safe, inclusive culture favorable of and conducive to student and adult learning promotes the adoption of academic and personal behaviors where student voice is welcomed and valued.

Supporting Evidence

- During the interview with school constituents, both parents and students shared that the safety and respect for different cultures and the uniqueness of each student is an important value at the school as the faculty work to develop rapport with each stakeholder. School leaders and staff have made revisions to the school discipline policy to reward positive behavior via community meetings and communicate behavior expectations through notifications on the school’s online grading system which is shared with parents and students. As shared by students, a demerit system is in place for infractions that are not aligned to the school’s cultural values on focus, resilience, passion, and determination, and has resulted in an awareness of their own behavior in school, leading to a safe environment. The school also offers multiple opportunities to celebrate diversity through its theatre arts and sports programs as well as other after school offerings which fosters an inclusive culture.

- Students shared that the theatre arts, which is tied to studying social issue topics such as gentrification and racism, opens the opportunity to have an open mic in their classes and fosters a welcoming climate. One student shared that the arts program as well as other classes has built up his confidence and it will assist him in having a voice as he progresses through his educational journey into college. Students shared that opportunities for scheduling changes helps them have a voice in revising their schedules. Prospects for students to act as leaders occur during the summer as they act as mentors for incoming students, assist in the main office to support summer school initiatives and management, and throughout the year, as they engage in the design of and/or direct school plays.

- The Grit rubric was developed by the school staff in response to the need to increase student engagement and task ownership. During grade team meetings, teachers use the online grading system to review students’ academic and personal behaviors in order to develop interventions which involve parents and students. The eleventh-grade team reviewed a student’s credit accumulation, Regents and Grit scores, and teacher comments included on student work to determine behavioral interventions for the targeted student. Interventions discussed include conversations with his coach and parents, and conducting a conference with the student to set expectations. Other teams are in place, including the School Implementation Team (SIT) and the Attendance team, which monitor student social-emotional learning and academics to determine action plans and next steps towards increased improvement for students. The efforts in monitoring student academic and personal behaviors within these two teams has increased attendance rates across the past two school years and is shifting towards the school target rate of 90 percent.
Area of Focus

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Although a variety of assessments are in place, which include rubrics and performance-based tasks, ongoing checks for understanding, self-assessment, and cross-subject grading policies are inconsistent.

Impact

Teachers both inconsistently make effective adjustments and provide actionable feedback to meet student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have created rubrics using the State and national standards as a guide or have utilized rubrics from State exams to provide students with grades on work products. Although students reported often checking their grades using an online grading system, grading policies differ across departments and students report that most of the work and grades are provided at the end of the marking period. In the living environment syllabus, 50 percent of the grade is based upon the completion of do nows, exit tickets, participation and attendance, 20 percent focuses on exams and projects, 20 percent on the completion of labs, and an additional 10 percent for homework. However, in English, 30 percent of the marking period grade consists of essays, exams, and projects and another 30 percent on classwork and 40 percent on compositions which has led to inconsistency for students understanding the expectations for improving their grades. In addition, a review of student work in folders and on bulletin boards reflects some feedback that offers clear next steps such as, “I like that you labeled the x and y axis. I would like to see you include units when you label the x and y and correct minor errors,” as it provides an example as a reference for the student. However, across classes, feedback did not offer clear next steps and examples, and at times, teachers only provided a grade, thus limiting students’ abilities to improve their work.

- In an interview, only some students shared clear next steps relative to improving the quality of their work. One student stated that her teacher provided her with a writing checklist strategy called diction, imagery, details, and language (DIDL), which she is currently using to help with adding more descriptive details into her writing. However, other students were unable to articulate the same level of feedback from their teachers. One student shared that his teacher told him to work harder as a means of feedback. Another student stated that based on his feedback, his teacher told him to go into more depth with his writing but did not provide a strategy or example to use as a reference to assist him with his revisions. Other students provided similar responses where the feedback did not provide clarity towards next steps in order to improve their work and receive a higher grade.

- In some classes, the use of exit slips or teacher questioning is used to gauge and reteach concepts where students misunderstood the task. However, in a global studies class, the exit slip used did not align with the learning objective of the lesson. Additionally, only some teachers conducted one-to-one conferences and used a checklist to keep track of student progress. In a theater arts class while assessing monologues, the same two students gave feedback to students which did not allow other students to engage in the same reflection process. In a science class, the teacher asked questions to the whole class to gauge where the class was with the completion of the assignment and yet no whole class adjustment was made to support students in completing the task correctly.
## Additional Finding

<table>
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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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### Findings

Although some teacher-created units reflect the integration of instructional shifts and alignment across grades using the Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards, the curricula is in the process of becoming fully aligned and refined using data and student work for all learners.

### Impact

Planning documents have yet to reflect tasks based on purposeful decisions to build coherence, promote post-secondary readiness, and ensure all students are cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence

- A review of English Language Arts (ELA) units across grades integrate argumentative writing and central idea skill building using close reading strategies including annotation. In a tenth-grade unit titled, *Ourselves and Others*, the essential question focuses on the importance of building communities that are supportive and accepting of all. The unit also highlights skills such as analyzing the impact of cultural backgrounds on point of view and developing supporting inferences about the theme while citing evidence. Throughout the grade ten pacing calendar, tasks include students engaging in panel discussions analyzing multiple genres and writing speeches and research reports. Similarly, in an eleventh-grade unit on the influence of popular perception, some of the focus standards include citing text evidence to support the analysis of inference drawn from texts and determining two or more themes or central ideas from a text which lead into an argumentative essay.

- In a United States history unit, an emphasis on content and Common Core Learning reflects a focus on literacy skills including the analysis of arguments and stating a claim with supporting evidence while using Supreme Court cases and the Constitution as texts. However, in a global history unit, endured understandings from content standards and the types of tasks have yet to reflect the integration of instructional shifts. Similarly, in an anatomy and physiology lesson plan, the task requires students to answer sets of questions which do not require developing central ideas or citing evidence from texts.

- In an algebra I unit for a grade ten, third semester class, the development of module tasks using data have yet to reflect adjustments reflective of the students’ needs. Instead, students are provided with tasks that replicate the exact same pacing as a ninth grade class with no refinement to the planning to further challenge students who may have met certain standards. Across other units and lesson plans, only some tasks reflect different types of supports and groupings of students. In a tenth-grade ELA lesson plan, the task contains alternative questions and provides references or themes as support for certain students. However, in a geometry course lesson plan, although the procedure indicates the use of differentiated projects for students considered to be higher achievers, the task does not reflect any of these adjustments or designate students for more challenging work.
**Additional Finding**

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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**Findings**

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the school’s core beliefs on how students learn best as informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and instructional shifts. Teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

**Impact**

Instructional practices and strategies do not include opportunities for students to engage in rigorous tasks and/or demonstrate higher-order thinking skills across subject areas, in discussions, and/or work products.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders stated that the school's core beliefs consist of ensuring that student-centered lessons are integrated in classrooms with a literacy lens and that there is focused instruction to lead students to be engaged and build upon the foundation of their learning. Common practices reflecting this belief consist of the use of annotation and active reading strategies in each subject area, the articulation of learning objectives and providing a clear rationale for them, and full engagement in tasks. In an ELA class, students used annotation strategies such as chunking and underlining or highlighting to assist in their analysis of the theme in an article on apartheid. In addition, after reviewing two videos and using the analysis, the students wrote their central idea and supported it with details from different sources. However, consistent use or reinforcement of these practices were only reflected in some classes. In a United States history class, only some students used annotation strategies while reading their texts in order to answer document-based questions.

- In a geometry class, in order to graph coordinates to determine the differences between the congruence and similarity of geometric figures, all of the students were given the same worksheet which consisted of several recall questions, leaving students to use the majority of their time to complete the sheet. Similarly in a science class, students were all asked to complete the same questions on an anatomy worksheet. In addition, several students were unable to complete the entire task by the end of the period and those that were finished were not provided any additional challenging work.

- In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) global history class, students were asked to write a love letter to the Great Wall of China, the Silk Road, or Great Pyramids and explain why they believe they are the greatest building achievement of mankind. Although students use the but, because, so strategy to frame their letters, some of the responses to this task reflected writing aligned to basic inferences with few references to their text and several thoughts or ideas included did not pertain to the topic or article. In an ELA class, only a few students were able to provide responses which synthesized why a character in a book referred to certain actresses as symbols of beauty, and the responses were directed solely between the teacher and those students, therefore leading to the engagement of a small portion of the class.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School staff consistently communicate high expectations to parents on schoolwide expectations. Teachers and other faculty members, including external college advisory partnerships, establish a culture for learning and offer ongoing feedback on post-secondary readiness to students.

Impact

Parents understand their children’s progress towards graduation and students are aware of their progress to prepare for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Letters, emails, and texts are tools that are used to communicate family events and other ongoing structures that share information about the school’s expectations and how to help their children become post-secondary ready. Through the ninth-grade summer bridge program, parents are invited for a separate workshop to help them learn about the school’s policies, what to expect during the upcoming school year, and how to help their children academically. Information on credit accumulation and exam requirements to graduate is provided. Additionally, through school partnerships and the college advisor, workshops are offered where parents can learn about the college application and the financial aid application process. Parents reported that these informational sessions are helpful and offer guidance to assist their children’s academic progress.

- Parents shared that the online grading program allows them to access their children’s grades throughout the year and thus, are able to follow up with teachers or a counselor as needed for support. In addition, parent-teacher conferences and one-to-one meetings provide opportunities to inquire and respond to their children’s grades. Several parents reported that teachers have been very supportive, which has led to their child’s progress in school. One parent reported that after viewing the online grading program, she noticed her child was struggling in certain classes, so she reached out to all the teachers who then placed him in tutoring. Currently, he has improved in his courses. Other parents reported that all the teachers and counselors have responded similarly which has led to the improvement in their children’s grades.

- A myriad of program support on the college application process is offered for eleventh and twelfth graders. A college advisor, in partnership with a community-based organization which offers an additional counselor, tracks the progress of the entire senior cohort throughout the year and even assists them with college registration. As a result of these efforts, 85 percent of the 2016-2017 senior cohort applied and were admitted into college. Eleventh graders are supported with registering for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and are offered to attend college trips. During a meeting, students reported that their teachers and counselors assisted in their guidance and provided support in attaining their graduation goals. Action planning and timelines are provided and students reported that the expectation is that they take advantage of programs including tutoring to help them improve in their classes and pass their State exams. Similarly, ninth and tenth graders meet with their teachers and counselors to assess their progress and monitor credit accumulation. In addition, the ninth-grade summer bridge program is a two-week orientation program which engages new students around the expectations for the upcoming school year, including attending classes and information sessions. Students reported that these structures have been helpful in understanding what is needed to pass their courses and reach their graduation goals.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Teacher teams are in the process of using the inquiry process to further align themselves to the school goals and consistently analyze data and student work for groups of students.

Impact

Across subject-area and grade teams, team members have yet to foster the improvement of teacher practice, increase student progress, and strengthen instructional capacity.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade-level teams meet weekly to discuss a set of targeted students, chosen based on their level of performance and types of personal behaviors. Teachers use protocols to discuss and determine patterns which have not led to increases in student grades or an increased rate of passing on the Regents exams. For one student, one teacher reported that the student was behind in her math and science classwork and homework. Some interventions the grade team decided consisted of the student meeting with a counselor in order to help her build relationships, yet instructional interventions were not shared.

- Department teams meet weekly on Mondays to engage in collaborations to discuss data and planning. During the month of September, school leaders introduced the use of protocols to structure meetings, provided teachers with time to analyze Regents data and develop an individual, professional inquiry question. However, a focus for inquiry at a team level has yet to be established. In history, one teacher stated her question is to determine whether providing feedback in a timely manner for students will aid in their ability to apply the strategies taught in a more effective way. Another teacher decided to focus his inquiry question on whether using calculators will help students with processing their answer easily. Although, teachers are developing inquiry questions for themselves as part of this process, increasing the instructional capacity across team members and developing a consistent focus for inquiry to monitor student achievement is a work in progress.

- During a team observation, teachers reviewed an online grade tool and shared their noticings about two eleventh-grade students. Teachers reported that one of the students had improved his behavior in school yet his attendance is still a continuous issue. After reviewing his academic record, teachers decided to contact his parents about his performance and presence in school while continuing to reaffirm their academic expectations with him. Similarly, with a second student, teachers discussed conferring with him about his behavior and incorporating other teachers in the school who are familiar and can encourage the student to become a more effective student. When asked about how this work increases their professional growth, teachers shared that it reminded them of the importance to set clear expectations during instruction and be reflective about their practices; however team members did not specify clear instructional interventions for groups of students.