Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Brooklyn Institute For Liberal Arts
High school 17K745

600 Kingston Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11203

Principal: Ann Marie Henry Stephens

Dates of Review:
April 16, 2018 - April 17, 2018

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 Institute For Liberal Arts 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

### Instructional Core

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</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>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>Area of Focus</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### School Culture

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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>1.4 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>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

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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>Well Developed</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>
</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>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<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>Proficient</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>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
FINDINGS

School leaders systematically communicate a unified set of high expectations to staff and students to establish a culture for learning relative to schoolwide practices on increasing college readiness.

IMPACT

High expectations for staff has resulted in a culture of mutual accountability and led to ownership of the college process for all students in preparation for post-secondary trajectories.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

- Several structures are in place to communicate the school's instructional foci on questioning and discussion. To ensure the focus is tiered by grade level, teacher leaders and the school leaders have developed grade-specific instructional foci. In ninth grade, the focus consists of students developing the skill of citing and integrating relevant evidence to support arguments in discussion. In eleventh grade, the focus states that students will read and write thorough and cogent analysis of complex texts to develop claims and ideas in a variety of writing modalities. A review of data was conducted by a group of teachers and school leaders which led to the identification of the school instructional foci and a corresponding professional development plan. In addition, the staff handbook provides guidelines on the expectations for the school's instructional approach called Cycles of Inquiry, lesson planning aligned to the approach including how teachers plan for Habits of Mind, a set of skills that promote problem solving and reasoning. A review of lesson plans and the school curricula reflect full alignment to these elements of the instructional approach, thus demonstrating the establishment of a culture of collaboration and contributions from all staff to support and implement the school's expectations.

- School leaders and teacher leaders hold teachers accountable for ensuring lesson planning, unit planning and classroom instruction is reflective of the school's approach to teaching and learning through the feedback process. A review of the curricula prior to the following marking period provides teachers with feedback to ensure the grade-level focus is articulated throughout each unit and lesson. A review of a Global Studies unit shows that revisions were made to the essential questions and selection of activities in unit nine to foster more rigor and student engagement. In support of classroom instruction, teacher-led professional learning sessions are provided on question and discussion techniques. A review of feedback reflects that school leaders consistently make efforts to remind teachers to reflect on professional learning techniques obtained during these sessions and to use them with students during instruction.

- All students participate in student advisories where ongoing lessons are provided on grade-level and graduation expectations, possible career pathways and what it means to be college ready. A variety of internships at companies and local offices, including career development opportunities, are offered as well as Advanced Placement (AP) and early-college credit bearing classes. In addition, juniors and seniors take a college seminar class for additional support on writing their personal essays and developing action plans for college. The students spoke highly of the level of support they receive each year gearing them towards achieving their academic and personal goals. When asked about career readiness, one student stated and others interviewed agreed, “You can’t be career ready unless you are college ready” and continued to share ways she was working towards achieving her goals including attending Regents preparation courses, actively using advisory and college seminar to look for colleges of interest and attending early college courses. Each student interviewed has a commitment to retake Regents exams for a higher grade to be City University of New York ready, thus resulting in a college-minded culture.
Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Teaching strategies have yet to strategically provide multiple entry points through high-quality supports and extensions into the inquiry-based curricula in student work products and discussions.

Impact

Student work products and discussions have yet to reflect high levels of student thought, engagement, and ownership that demonstrate higher-order thinking in a few classes.

Supporting Evidence

- In several classes, student-to-student collaborations through structured group work was a common practice. In a bio-medical science class, students worked in small groups and pairs to develop a plan for constructing a model of their choice of techniques used for unblocking a blood vessel which would be used to demonstrate a procedure for a heart patient. Some students shared, "We will know if we are successful if we are able to create a model that clearly reflects the images we currently have of a stent," one of the three treatments. Other students were able to discuss how the content was relevant to them in understanding how to read their own medical records and those of their family members. Some students shared how they were working on ensuring that their model and talking points were research-based and reflected accurate statements that could be used in a real-life scenario and thus worked collaboratively to develop a plan to build their models. However, this level of student-to-student collaboration and engagement in developing high-quality work products has yet to be reflected in a few classes.

- In an English Language Arts (ELA) Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students were paired to take on different points of view and use evidence to support their positions from a text on whether the government should use handicaps to make society equal during a flash debate. Although teachers reviewed the routines of the debate and provided a guidance document which contained step-by-step procedures, the level of students' responses varied. Some students just summarized or restated their position without elaborating or using evidence to support their rationale. In some cases, student misconceptions led to incorrect statements about the text. In another ELA ICT class, students worked in partnerships to answer questions based on a text about boys and the economy. Although students annotated the text and worked with a partner to construct their responses to questions, in some cases, their written responses did not reflect critical thinking, completion, or accuracy in their answers.

- In an Algebra class, students worked with each other in stations on problems related to linear and exponential functions using word problems with real-world scenarios. However, in some of the classes, instruction was more teacher directed with students responding directly to the teacher for most of the lesson. In a social studies lesson, the teacher primarily asked individual students questions about an image during the "engage" portion of the lesson. In a science class, the teacher's questions also focused on individual students in describing the types of animals that blend into the environment and whether they agreed or disagreed that blending helps them catch food. Consistent student-to-student discussion and engagement is a growing practice in a few classes.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders and faculty ensure the curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate ELA instructional shifts to foster text-based answers and writing from sources using coherently embedded rigorous tasks.

**Impact**

Inquiry-based critical thinking tasks are emphasized across grades and subject areas where all students must demonstrate their thinking using analysis, thus promoting college and career readiness.

**Supporting Evidence**

- All curricula have been refined to align with the school’s *Cycles of Inquiry* approach and include how teachers incorporate good Habits of Mind practices in their planning documents. Teachers and school leaders standardize the structure of their units using the Understanding by Design template and teachers reported using a backward design and data-based approach when creating their curricula for each term. In a unit plan for an English 10 class, a detailed rationale is included which ties to writing literary analysis essays and the use of “more sophisticated analysis” directly aligned to the tenth grade focus of providing students with opportunities for “thorough and cogent analysis.” Some of the learning goals for the unit include a focus on the analysis of how complex characters develop across the course of a text, their interactions, and advancing the plot or theme leading to a literary analysis essay to explain those themes from the text. Additionally, activities that are aligned with Habits of Mind are included such as raising complex questions about human relationships and working through complex problems with no obvious answers, in order to deepen students’ understanding of texts.

- Intentional thought in the creation of tasks and the integration of the instructional shifts are embedded in all core subject areas, including the arts. In an Algebra unit, the unit rationale and objectives include the use of empirical data and observations to create conjectures about different forms of quadratic functions that will be investigated in different lessons. Students will use different representations of functions as evidence which can be argued using the proper characteristics and then proceed to justify their reasoning through verbal and written responses which ties to both ELA and math instructional shifts. In a music unit plan, students will engage in tasks which require them to conduct research in learning two forms of production and determine stylistic elements that a certain genre of music adheres to while finding the best method for creating their project. Furthermore, students will be engaged in tasks where they will be reading articles and biographies to form claims and determine commonalities and differences in their analysis, thus allowing students to use multiple sources and develop deeper understanding of songwriters, their recognitions, and journeys towards success.

- Planned tasks entail prompts and resources to ensure all students, regardless of ability, are fully engaged and thinking critically. In a reverse engineering unit plan, students will be required to use a series of guided reading passages to obtain an understanding of the visual and functional aspects of designed products to develop online presentations on the functional analysis of a pen. To ensure diverse students are engaged, visuals and tiered questions are integrated into the same task. In a Global Studies unit plan titled the *World at War*, students will study a range of images and documents to examine the motives and strategies and evaluate them for bias using evidence. Taken together, a review of tasks fosters student thinking for a variety of learners to reinforce critical thinking across grades and subjects.
Additional Finding

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

Across the school, teachers use formative assessment practices which include the use of standards-based rubrics which align to the curricula, as well as checks for understanding and self-assessment to gauge student understanding in classes.

Impact

Ongoing, in-the-moment assessment practices and actionable feedback regarding student achievement lead to adjustments in practices in support of meeting all student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- During a meeting, students reported that the grading policy is evenly distributed with 20 percent fulfilling each category: classwork and discussion, homework, quizzes, projects, and exams. In addition, an online grading system is used to determine how they are progressing in each area which is provided on a weekly basis. Standards-based rubrics are used for all classes, ranging from one-to-five points, to ensure students receive feedback and grades that show where they are performing related to the curricula. Students reported that the grading system is helpful in conducting peer revision activities and that they use rubrics to help provide feedback to peers.

- Most students shared that they receive feedback which provides clear next steps to help them improve their work. One student shared that for an AP Literature class, the teacher suggested areas needing a review of grammar for clarity and provided her with examples of transition words and other formal language to make her essay more sophisticated. Using the feedback provided, the student was able to get a higher grade on the revised version. Another student shared that her teacher asked her to work on further elaborating her essay on how boys are raised and suggested adding more transition words to improve the structure of the writing. Similarly, other students were able to share their areas of strengths and improvements based on reviewing their feedback and a rubric.

- Across classes, teachers were viewed using the “engage,” providing introductory assessment questions, and “evaluate” portions for self-assessment of the lesson to obtain information about students’ progress in class. In addition, teachers check-in with students while they are engaged in a task and small group discussions. In a social studies class where students were working in three groups, the teacher used text-to-world related questions to help students understand the meaning behind a poem on the First World War. The teacher also used relatable examples to help students revisit the meaning of unknown words and how they related to the poem’s stanzas. In an ELA class, the teacher actively worked with groups of students to help them analyze the characters in a text. When misconceptions occurred, the teacher rephrased the questions that were provided by asking the students, “What does the character want? How is that the same or different from the other characters?” which led the students to producing the correct answer and the ability to complete their assignment. During an interview, students shared that they use exit slips to assess their own understanding and teachers usually revisit the concept the next day. A review of student work shows that self-assessment is a common practice as students have opportunities to self-assess their work using a standards-based rubric.
## Additional Finding

<table>
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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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### Findings

School leaders support the development of a range of teachers with feedback that captures strengths, areas for improvement and next steps using student data and work relative to the schools’ goals on student engagement and inquiry-based instruction.

### Impact

Ongoing, frequent feedback supports teachers by articulating and reinforcing the school’s instructional expectations and elevating the quality of teaching and learning through professional reflection.

### Supporting Evidence

- A review of observation reports shows that school leaders use student work and data as part of memorializing their ongoing cycles of feedback. After reviewing student responses for an English class observation, the school leaders noted that students struggled in understanding the poetry presented and several of them were unable to complete the assigned graphic organizer. As a suggestion, the recommendation included having students use annotation as a means for understanding and analyzing the poetry which should be reinforced in future lessons. In an observation report for a math lesson, the school leader noted specific students’ misconceptions in their use of the first, outer, inner, last method, or FOIL, and suggested that the teacher use an “ask my partner, then ask me” approach so that reliance and ownership falls on the student versus the teacher in attaining correct answers, thus promoting the use of effective instructional strategies.

- Observation reports reflect an emphasis on the school’s instructional focus towards promoting student engagement and inquiry-based instruction. In one observation report, the school leader provides guidance on pacing and indicating specificity in planning the engagement and evaluation activities, which ties to the school’s *Cycles of Inquiry* approach. The school leader recommends that the teacher consider the task and the amount of time provided for the engagement portion, which she suggests should be only five to ten minutes. Additionally, the suggestion includes listing criteria for success for students by articulating points of completion to them, enabling students to take more ownership of the activity and remain on task. In another lesson, school leaders recommend assigning student roles for group work and using debate strategies or structures utilized in other departments. Overall, continued reinforcement of the school leaders’ expectations on student engagement is promoting the school’s core beliefs and teaching practices across classes.

- Consistent application and use of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* language and support is reflected across observation reports which provide detail to move teacher practice towards effective and highly effective levels. For one teacher, the first observation demonstrated effective practices as the teacher used a variety of questions to promote inquiry-based thinking in a science lesson. In support of the teacher’s next steps, recommendations include providing opportunities for guided practice which lead to the independent application of the skill. Additionally, suggestions include providing extensions to further challenge students or reteach as necessary yet having the teacher serve in more of a facilitative stance. During the subsequent lesson, the teacher used these strategies which led to a highly effective rating in the student engagement component, as all students were observed intellectually engaged and involved in complex thinking throughout the lesson.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in content-level, structured inquiry-based teams. Structures are in place in support of shared decision making in planning and instruction.

Impact

Professional collaborations increase teachers’ ability to build leadership and instructional capacity through decision making, fostering stronger connections to the Common Core Learning Standards, instructional shifts, and schoolwide goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet weekly on content and grade-level teams to review student work and data and determine implications for instruction and advisory, which is used as an additional supplemental support for student intervention. In connection with the school’s goals to increase course pass rates, academic, also known as “stretch” goals, and college readiness, teams meet to review summative and formative data. During these meetings, teachers modify plans to increase students’ application of the instructional shifts including citing evidence and ensuring deep analysis in their responses. A review of notes and responses from interviews reveal that teachers are furthering their learning on how to best meet the diverse needs of their students. Teams are planning more practices in teaching students how to deepen the use of strategies, and are increasing time for tasks requiring interpretation skills, which are some of the newer practices teachers feel are increasing students’ outcomes. Teachers shared that they are learning that using tiered questions and graphic organizers to aid students in providing detailed context of their analysis has helped students in the skill of elaboration.

- During a team meeting, math teachers reviewed their diagnostic data to determine which standards were to serve as focus areas and determined implications for instruction. After review of student work and data, teachers determined that students needed support in understanding systems of inequalities and equations and understanding what the task is asking of them. The team decided to create a plan where the presenting teacher could use station teaching to reinforce these areas and use tools including graphic organizers and graphing calculators to assist students with math precision and perseverance.

- Teacher team decision making on the pacing of units and other modifications, as well as suggesting best practice techniques fosters increased access for students to engage in standards-based tasks. As a result of conversations from the math team, school leaders have offered teacher-led training for other departments on effective talk moves to further teacher practices relative to the school’s instructional foci and inquiry-based instruction. The ELA team designed and added an additional unit of study on rhetoric in connection to media and how it affects society. The team made this decision to streamline skills and build course clarity between core English classes and AP English, providing diverse learners access to more rigorous coursework.