

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Brooklyn Community Arts & Media High School

High School 412

**300 Willoughby Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11205**

Principal: James O'Brien

**Dates of review: March 30- 31, 2009
Lead Reviewer: Ainslie Cumberbatch**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Brooklyn Community Arts & Media High School (BCAM) is a high school with 328 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 78% Black, 17% Hispanic, 3% White and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 86.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 61% eligibility.

The school shares some facilities, such as the gymnasium, cafeteria and library, with five other schools accommodated within the building.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The school has worked hard over the past three years to build a unique and authentically communal high school. The school's focus on the arts and media allows students to explore the world in personal, academic, and creative ways. School staff acknowledge the academic challenges their school faces and partner with parents to ensure that the school's motto of, "Academic, Creative, and Professional Preparation for the 21st Century" is realized. Students, staff and parents applaud the leadership qualities of the principal and assistant principal and support them in their efforts to build a school of choice. School staff champion the cause that all students will have access to a quality education leading to roles as "critics and creators".

A strong partnership with the Institute for Student Achievement (ISA) provides the school with a bank of knowledge and resources that support its growth. The school collects and analyzes a range of data some of which has had an impact on student outcomes. However, the school has not yet realized its initial goal of convening portfolio exhibitions to culminate academic semesters and to complement Regents exam completion. Parents support the school's efforts and identify opportunities to help engage and motivate students, such as "snowboarding", as evidence of the unique nature of the school. Nevertheless, the school has its share of challenges and struggles in respect of improving student relationships and with regard to moving a significant portion of its founding cohort to meet graduation requirements. It is not complacent, however and has moved swiftly to address low pass rates in Regents tests in global history and living environment by putting in place an intensive skills-based Regents preparation program.

BCAM has made good progress since its last review in the areas of tracking student progress and analyzing data related to sub-groups, although there is too little analysis in respect of gender. To build a solid leadership base that focuses on school improvement and student growth, the principal created grade and vertical teams, as well as school committees, to work collaboratively and monitor and address student needs. These are having a positive impact on student achievement. However, the systems for tracking and measuring progress towards meeting overall school priorities and for goal-setting for individual students are not well enough developed. The school's inquiry team meets weekly and is focusing on improving student competency in math. Although still fledgling, this work is beginning to lead to improvement in student achievement.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has very good communication systems for keeping parents fully informed of school activities and their children's progress.
- The staff, students and parents share and demonstrate high expectations for improving student achievement.
- The principal makes informed and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support improvements in learning.
- Teachers work collaboratively to collect and share data, ideas and good practice to continually improve student learning.
- The school has developed strong external partnerships, which provide students with high-quality internships, college opportunities and enhanced academic electives.
- This small school is supportive of students, staff and families with a sound understanding of its strengths, areas for continued development and a clear vision and commitment for its future growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend data gathering and analysis to include more detailed examination of gender sub-groups to identify trends and patterns in their learning.
- Build on the well-focused start to goal setting by enabling all teachers to develop their practice in setting individual academic learning goals for students that define next steps in achieving long-term goals.
- Improve relationships among students across grades to foster an environment that is conducive to learning for all students.
- Develop interim goals and benchmarks for all action plans that enable the principal and faculty to modify goals and objectives in a timely manner in order to optimize the impact of actions and to celebrate success along the way.

Part 3: Main Findings

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school administers quarterly comprehensive Design Your Own (DYO) assessments in English and math through ISA and uses the results to identify which specific skills to emphasize in future curricula units and which students need focused attention. Individual departments within the school create their own assessments every four to six weeks in other subject areas which are analyzed by teachers. Teachers use *Teacherease*, an online grade program, to analyze grade averages per assignment, graph student performance and calculate averages for each category of class assignment. As a result, teachers receive immediate feedback on the success of assignments and use this information in planning future lessons, identifying the most appropriate resources and differentiating instruction. Students and parents log into *Teacherease* throughout the marking period quarter and view current student grades and missing assignments. This facilitates timely feedback on student performance. The school reports frequently on student progress via mid-quarter progress reports, as well as end-of-quarter cumulative reports. Ninth grade teachers distribute progress reports every two weeks, with two teachers doing so weekly. Attendance and lateness data is published and distributed each quarter for discussion during quarterly parent-teacher conferences, resulting in some improvement in attendance.

BCAM analyzes data on teacher, course, grade and department course pass rates. School staff analyze this data during grade team meetings and use it to set goals for individual student achievement. Based on data collection by the inquiry team the math department modified the ninth and tenth grade math curriculum to include a focus on math literacy and greater application of equations across topics resulting in improved performance by both grades. However, the school does not look closely enough at achievement and progress by gender and grade. Consequently, the school has not identified if specific issues are affecting the learning of these groups.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Teachers build in informal and formal assessments into each curriculum unit they teach. They use the data they gain from these assessments to set goals for individual students or groups of students and also to plan for subsequent units. Specific teachers in the ninth grade are experimenting with various methods for goal-setting while the school is working towards creating a procedure in English, math and other core academic areas that includes, within each curriculum unit, a process for formally setting individual student learning goals. At present, this work is underdeveloped. The individual goal-

setting process is not formal in nature, is not specific to an individual student and does not map out a detailed plan and timeline.

The school engages in a collaborative planning process of goal-setting to complete the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP). Several committees that include staff and administrators meet to discuss and make recommendations related to discipline, academic improvement and school culture. Parent input is sought as well through the Parents Association and parent conferences. This process enables the school to develop action plans and goals that reflect key issues including improving Regents pass rates and course scholarship. For example, after examining the data from the fall DY0, the English department identified specific skill areas in which students were struggling and provided targeted support in skill development. As a result of action taken, winter DY0 scores rose on average 0.4 in English. However, the school has not publicized the collaborative goals developed to all members of the school community in a timely fashion for them to understand and internalize them. Consequently, the Senior Leadership Team does not always benefit from feedback from this wider community when it undertakes school-wide planning to reach these goals.

Grade team meetings enable staff to share views and discuss their expectations for students' work and behavior. This has raised expectations across the school. Discussion in grade teams allows teachers time to decide goals for individual students and ways to differentiate instruction and student support. At department team meetings teachers share curricula units, experiences, and outcomes in order to develop strategies for classroom engagement and performance on Regents exams. Advisors meet with students in advisories to set learning targets and discuss their progress. The school schedules conferences with families each academic quarter where they receive a quarterly report card, an attendance report and an updated transcript. The school uses this opportunity to discuss high expectations and share course goals. Parents value the college relationships with John Jay, New York University (NYU) and Pratt. They love the school and express that, "They have it right here". Parents share that they feel welcome and informed about student progress but are not aware of individual goal-setting for students.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The rich instructional program includes an intensive arts and media focus that engages students both creatively and intellectually resulting in more positive outcomes for students than in core subject areas. In global history and science, for example, Regents pass rates are below the expectations of the administration. The school has recognized the need for action and, after examining the data from Regents exams, student work and feedback from advisories, the administration aligned teaching methods to address Regents skills deficiencies. Intervisitations across grades and subject areas are in place as well to capture effective teaching strategies that impact student outcomes. The school follows a collaborative team teaching (CTT) model with an emphasis on math and English. The administration is committed to developing an effective CTT model as evidenced in its professional development program and school goals. Staff work intensively with special needs students on achieving examination success, including Regents. As a result, special education students are making significant progress and represent among the most improved in credit accumulation. Despite the absence of a

specialist teacher of English as a second language (ESL) the three English language learners are making good progress. This is because they are well supported by a special education teacher . The school is in the process of finalizing the assignment of an ESL teacher to further assist these students.

Teachers collaborate on lesson planning. They include differentiation of instruction in unit planning but this is not yet consistently implemented in classrooms. Senior leaders encourage professional dialogue and participation in professional development. Teachers state that they feel supported by the administration. One teacher states, “The lines between teacher and administrator are blurred” and “Almost no decision is made unilaterally”. Staff describe the principal as, “Tireless, a mentor, a leader and a negotiator.” This current response of staff is a positive contrast to the one noted in the previous Learning Environment Survey.

The school’s organizational structure reflects thoughtful planning related to flexible scheduling. For example, each Wednesday, students are dismissed early allowing staff time to meet in grade teams, specialized committees and academic departments. This school year the schedule for 11th grade students was dramatically altered to facilitate the inclusion of an Advanced Placement English course, Honors Spanish and courses for students who are not on track for graduation, based on these discussions. Initial results indicate that these programs are effective. Student responses indicate that they are very motivated and that they think highly of their teachers. However, students and teachers commented on a lack of respect between students and referred to discipline issues with some conflict between upper and lower term students. The school is addressing the issue through advisory, relationship building across grades and the restructuring of staff assignments. Early indications, exhibited in school tone, seem to show that these efforts are working.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school runs a good professional development program aligned to school goals. Teachers work with the principal at the beginning of the school year to establish goals that inform their ongoing professional development, adjusting the professional development plan as needed. The school has two new teachers who receive in-house mentoring in their content area. One new teacher remarked, “I don’t feel I could be in a better place”. ISA provides staff with professional development opportunities, including visits to other ISA schools to view effective practices. The school makes the most of its horizontal and vertical team structures. Vertical department teams meet weekly to focus on curriculum and department-specific issues. Horizontal grade teams meet two to three times a month to focus on grade-specific systems, mechanisms and conference about students. Improved student outcomes have resulted. The principal and assistant principal conduct observations weekly and provide feedback. These structures strengthen staff relationships and build a network among professionals.

The school’s inquiry team works alongside two math teachers to improve the math competency of 24 students in the ninth and tenth grade. As a result of last year’s work, more emphasis was placed this year on the length of time scheduled for specific topics and the extent of collaboration between teachers. Progress is noted in this area. School wide, there is a strong focus on students’ personal growth that is evident in discussions that take place at teacher meetings and in advisories. The school has a strong

partnership with ISA and uses the organization's resources to impact on instruction and youth development. In addition, the school partners with local artists and a host of community organizations to enrich the instructional program and enhance the list of electives. John Jay, NYU and Pratt provide opportunities for students to earn college credits and enroll in internships. However, at present there is no formal evaluation of the effectiveness of external partnerships.

Students describe their principal as, "There for us". Parents appreciate the willingness of teachers during lunchtime and after school to work with students. They like the access to student information that the *Teacherease* program provides and the college connections the school has made. They describe the principal as, "Personable, accessible" and share that he is approachable and someone they can talk to.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Each grade team has a plan for improving student outcomes, but measurable interim goals and benchmarks to improve student and teacher outcomes have not yet been set. As a result, evaluating the progress of all initiatives so that they improve school, grade, teacher or student outcomes is challenging. Based on graduation tracking data, the school has modified schedules, assignments, and placements of students to support them. A review of student progress happens routinely several times a month in grade and department teams. The administration and department chairs meet weekly to analyze informal and formal data and use it to plan both short-term and long-term action plans and goals. Nonetheless, interim goals are not sufficiently explicit, public, or stated in measureable terms. Students want to take ownership of their progress but are not skilled in setting their own learning goals to meet course or graduation requirements.

Staff use the DYO data in English and math and department generated assessments in other subjects well but, while there are plans to develop a more comprehensive DYO assessment structure, at present this does not extend to all core areas. The school updates goals in the CEP as necessary to reflect new information. To complement this effort, teachers continuously work in grade and department teams to evaluate and revise goals, curricula planning, assessment and practice to impact student outcomes. Staff have firm plans to finalize the four year scope and sequence of actions and skills to which academic departments, classes, and students are held accountable. At present, however, its absence is detrimental to the school's ability to be proactive in monitoring and supporting student progress.

The principal has a clear vision for the direction of the school and engages in collaborative conversations with all school constituencies to determine and incorporate their perspectives. The school uses available data from student progress, the Quality Review and other data sources to plan and execute realistic and timely goals. Staff retreats provide an additional mechanism for the school to remain focused on present progress and future direction. The school's self-evaluation paints a clear picture of the school's journey but a lack of specific, timed benchmarks prevents an accurate evaluation of the extent to which they are on track to achieve their goals.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Brooklyn Community Arts & Media High School	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?		X		
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?		X		
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYO, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X				
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X				
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X				
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?				X			
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X				
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X				
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?		X					
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X				
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X				
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed