

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

Brooklyn School for Global Studies

MS/HS 429

**284, Baltic Street
Brooklyn
NY 11201**

Principal: Lisa Gibbs

Dates of review: November 24 - 25, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Andy McClean

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Brooklyn School for Global Studies is a middle/high school with 532 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 51.7% Black, 39.3% Hispanic, 5.3% White, and 0.8% Asian students. The student body includes 5.6% English language learners and 23.3% special education students. Boys account for 51.87% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48.12%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 85.03%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 60.9% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal's enthusiasm and determination to enhance the self esteem of teachers, parents and, above all, students, is evident to the whole school. The administration's comprehension of current strengths and challenges results from a realistic interpretation of a wide range of data. This data establishes appropriate goals for the school, as well as precise goals for students. The recent employment, school-wide, of an online assessment system begins to pay dividends. Teachers, parents and students receive real time feedback on student performance across a wide range of subjects. As yet, not all teachers challenge students, particularly those of high ability, sufficiently through wider differentiation in planning and instruction.

The use of student-led parent conferences continues to empower students with the responsibility for managing their own goals, across a range of subjects. All students understand that they have choices to make and are ultimately responsible for their own success or lack of it. School leaders are aware of the need to continue this innovative practice, to ensure that the number of parents participating in their children's self assessment increases. Students testify to feeling safe, secure and known by many members of the faculty. Evidence of mutual trust and support exists throughout school. High school students receive a wide variety of support to assist them to attain college placements. Middle school students enjoy the security of regular conferences and advisories to put them on a correct path for academic and personal progress. A wide curriculum enables many students to participate in activities that enhance their talents and gifts, with recent State- and City-wide success in basketball as a prime example.

The work of the Inquiry Team, based on solid analysis of contemporary data, leads to a faculty-wide dialogue about current instructional practices. As a result of this very collegial work, the team provides evidence to school leaders and colleagues on major areas for improvement. These include strengthening and extending the students' comprehension and use of non-fiction materials in all classes, not just English language arts and math. Another aspect of school life, where clarity of communication from the Inquiry Team to administration has been successful, is the need to ensure that best instructional practice is evident in all grades and not interrupted by the middle-high school transition. Recent work on identification of student learning styles shows promise although teachers' planning does not yet build sufficiently on teachers' knowledge of these learning styles to ensure that all students are fully engaged.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's clear understanding of the school's current strengths and challenges is well founded on very good processes for school self-evaluation.
- Faculty members make very good use of technology to track student progress and assess student need.
- The learning environment enables students to grow in a strong culture of mutual respect and trust which celebrates the gifts and talents of all students.
- Through innovate practice, students take full responsibility for their own progress and communicate this to their parents.
- A very reflective faculty, ably led by their administration, measures progress towards goals precisely and regularly and makes adjustments in programs as necessary.
- Inquiry Team research into students with greatest need has stimulated a faculty-wide dialogue on what constitutes best practice and enabled all teachers to reflect on how to improve their own instruction.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the use of data to differentiate planning and instruction and ensure greater challenge to high ability students.
- Further develop successful instructional practice identified in Inquiry Team research to ensure consistency of teaching through the whole school.
- Ensure greater student engagement in all classes by responding more effectively to the variety of students' learning styles.
- Continue to strengthen lines of communication with families to ensure their understanding of the importance of their children's full attendance and meeting their individual goals.

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 well developed.

The school has well established systems to collect a wide range of data across many content areas. The use of technology to assess student achievement enables not only faculty to track student progress in all subjects, but administration and parents too. Individual students and teachers access data to measure their success towards meeting goals. Administration uses contemporary analysis weekly and sometimes daily, to identify individuals or groups that are at risk of failure. A current example of this is the school's greater concentration on the progress of Hispanic and African-American boys in reading.

Use of online data enables students to form their own agendas for student-led parent conferences. This innovative and successful practice has seen significant growth in parental understanding of their children's work and progress. It is successful in allowing families to become a strong link in the chain of support for students. At the same time it signals to individual students which areas of specific subjects are strengths and which need immediate improvement. Special education students receive focused support as an outcome of regular data analysis by their teachers and administration. At regular intervals throughout the school years, students collect and collate portfolios of their own work, matched against rubrics for scrutiny by teachers and parents. This results in all students having a real-time awareness of their current performance. A rigorous system of data collection by students in high school enables them to prepare and present their work at roundtables, as an alternative form of Regents' assessment. This structure for the collection and use of data, from a range of subjects, is a powerful tool for all students' use within school.

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.

The principal, well supported by assistant principals and the leadership team, uses data to identify and pursue, with determination, whole school goals that reflect the areas of challenge. Regular meetings ensure that the whole faculty assess their progress towards these goals and make adjustments where necessary. The school's current focus on ensuring continuity between high and middle schools in the good use of content vocabulary and comprehension skills is a good example of the way staff have worked together to follow up issues, in this case, raised by the work of the Inquiry Team. Data is used very effectively to ensure individual students prepare for parent conferences. There is a whole school emphasis, directed by teachers, that encourages individual

students to take responsibility for setting, measuring and evaluating their own progress towards goals in many subjects. At present, however, teachers do not use information about students' individual goals well enough to plan effective differentiated instruction in all classes and, as a result, lessons do not sufficiently challenge higher achieving students.

Goals in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan result from a robust collaborative process involving a cross section of teachers, administrators and parents. By focusing on the precise nature of these goals, identified from trends and patterns in the data, the school achieves greater student motivation and independence in their learning. The principal conveys a strong message to all students and families about the importance of full attendance and punctuality, respectful behavior and academic excellence. The school has made strenuous efforts to increase the number of families who participate in their children's learning, and has set ambitious targets for improvement. For example, attendance at student led parental conferences currently stands at around 60% of parents; the school aims to achieve 100% in the near future.

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 school provides a broad and balanced curriculum with strong emphasis on the assimilation of basic skills in literacy and numeracy. This emphasis on developing improved stamina in reading, selecting of a wider range of non-fiction materials and ensuring that all students comprehend content specific vocabulary, is beginning to pay dividends in all areas of learning. Students show enthusiasm for music, art and particularly drama classes. A school goal of encouraging greater independence and use of initiative was typified by a drama class for senior students who showed great creativity in a class on improvisation to a specific theme. Faculty members give freely of their own time to support and guide their students through the challenges of teenage years. Feedback from students and families testifies to the mutual respect and trust evident in all areas of school life. The principal utilizes the budget creatively to ensure that teachers have resources and training to address school challenges.

Teachers use data effectively to plan suitable challenge for a majority of students, however in many classes, students of high ability complete work in a short time because it is insufficiently challenging. Too often, this group of students begins on the same worksheet as others, repeating work they have already covered and missing the opportunity to develop new skills. Teachers in a range of classes prepare their work assiduously but do not differentiate activities to ensure the work is at the right level to match the students' needs and potential. Recent school-based research has identified that students have a variety of different learning styles; nevertheless, there are too few lessons that recognize and respond to this information.

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's systems of guidance and support are especially effective for students who find difficulty with any aspect of school life and face challenges in their own lives outside school. They have resulted in improved student attendance and engagement in the many facets of school life. Preparation for college applications and exams is a particularly strong element of high school life with students participating in a variety of trips to colleges within the city.

Through its very structured analysis of student work, test and examination results and classroom observations, the Inquiry Team makes a significant contribution to improvement of student learning. It has communicated its conclusions well to faculty and, as a result, its work is respected and acted upon by many colleagues. The principal ensures that there is good time and resources for the team to complete its work without distraction. Its findings have given high school teachers an understanding of the need to provide more opportunities for students in all classes to access non-fiction materials of varying degrees of challenge. Regular formal and informal classroom observations underpin the school's dialogue about best instructional practice, which is effective in improving instruction. This, together with the work of the Inquiry Team has enabled the school to recognize inconsistencies in instructional quality across grades 6 to 12. Professional development is responsive to teachers' needs and provides opportunities for teachers to work together to develop new ideas. .

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 well developed.

The principal and administration continue to develop a highly reflective school where teachers, students and parents participate in a continual process of school self-evaluation to improve learning. There are regular opportunities to assess and readjust goals throughout the whole goal setting process. Teachers, students and families scrutinize individual progress, with the aid of an increasingly effective online support program. This results in a regular adjustment of targets across all content areas, with specific reference to those aspects of a module or course with which an individual student may have difficulty. Teachers use such assessments to identify groups of students at risk of failure and tailor support as necessary. However, there is insufficient differentiation in planning and instruction to maximise the achievements of the school's most able students.

School leaders use many evidence sources such as the Learning Environment Survey, the progress report and student assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of current instruction and organization. Informed by such evidence, the principal's strong vision to help students understand their world and manage change continues to contribute to school improvement. Clear lines of communication within the faculty, both formal and informal, result in an appropriate dialogue on issues currently affecting student progress. These strengths are also evident in students' and parents' observations that, above all, they feel known as individuals.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Brooklyn School for Global Studies.	△	➤	✓	+
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, DYQ, 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