

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Brian Piccolo

Middle school 053

**10-45 NAMEOKE STREET
QUEENS
NY 11691**

Principal: Shawn Rux

**Dates of review: May 29-30, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Michele Lloyd-Bey**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

M.S. 053 Brian Piccolo is a Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school with 509 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 64% Black, 32% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 85.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The administration analyzes a wide range of data, has a keen awareness of performance trends and progress of individual and groups of students, and is able to make informed instructional and organizational decisions and adjustments. (2.1)
 - o The newly assigned principal along with faculty who analyze summative data, including the Progress Report and State exams item skills analysis and student work samples, have identified the exact performance levels of every student, and ensure that this information is shared with teachers to assist in making instructional decisions, such as grouping and academic intervention support. The school provides professional development that is aligned with the identified needs, such as critical thinking and developing the skill of inferences. Teachers continue to analyze student progress based on content area unit exams, Periodic Assessments, and other computer generated instructional tools, thus developing an accurate view of students' strengths and weaknesses. Level 1 and Level 2 students are targeted for direct support during extended day and Saturday academy. Teacher teams meet and track the performance of subgroups and make suitable adjustments such as scheduling students for small group instruction. Hence, ACUITY results reveal that students with disabilities, and English language learners are making the most gains in English language arts and math.
- The principal has structures in place that are communicated in a variety of ways and involve parents in decision-making, ensuring the school community's awareness and support. (2.4)
 - o The school uses email, parent meetings, phone messenger, daily item announcements, newsletters, and mailings that clearly communicate the school's goals, expectations, and next steps, such as the integration of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The school leadership team is instrumental in ensuring that the Comprehensive Education Plan is current, explicit, and drives improvement efforts. Based on data informed needs of the school, there is a consistent drive by the principal to have all constituents on the same page, particularly students and their families. Parents comment that the principal is highly approachable with an open door policy that supports them in learning specific information about the school's direction, and the performance of their children. The school's relentlessness to improve student learning and social-emotional growth result in an inspirational CD, titled "Big Plans", produced by the principal and students. Hence, the entire school community is aware of the school's goals and expectations, and support for the school has strengthened as evident in the more than double parent participation at parent meetings as compared to the prior school year.
- Periodic assessments and other sources of common assessment data enable leaders and faculty to track progress and suitably adjust school wide plans and goals to support learning for individual and groups of students. (3.3)
 - o The school ensures that teacher teams meet weekly and analyze various forms of assessment data, including periodic assessments, and data from computer-based programs, to track student progress. Teams use item skills analysis generated from ACUITY, and effectively create lessons plans and standards-

based assessments and adjust school-wide plans , such as placing greater concentration on comprehension skills, specifically, main idea. This information is shared with students and their families in student progress reports and during parent-teacher meetings. As a result, while most students across the grades, including subgroups show gains in English language arts and math, in a particular grade 6 class, students' results in ELA improved from 47% proficient in November 2011 to 56% proficient in March 2012. In math, the class performed at 34% proficient in November 2011, and improved to 60% proficient in March 2012. In the grade 6 special needs class, ACUIY data results reveal that students made significant gains in English language arts and math. Thus, teachers' ability to collaboratively address and track students' needs has led to steady improvement in pedagogical practices through on-going support of colleagues in assisting students meet the expectations of CCLS.

- The school provides supports for students and creates strong partnerships to ensure that students achieve academically, develop social-emotional skills, and experience real world learning opportunities. (4.4)
 - o Based on the Learning Environment Survey, results indicated low scores for student engagement, safety, and respect. Therefore, in addition to providing academic professional development for staff, the school provides training on topics such as bullying for staff and parents. These trainings develop adults' ability to encourage students to behave and dialogue in respectful ways, and students are able to identify and communicate their observation regarding bullying to staff resulting in a safer school environment. Students participate in real-life learning experiences, during and after school, through venues such as trips, engaging guest speakers, and a plethora of activities such as martial arts, African drumming, dance, drama, music, and art. Assembly programs are designed to address social issues through character education programs such as "Project Boost", and "We Got Game with a Message" which supports students who continuously strive to raise their performance in attendance, behavior, and academic performance throughout the school year by engaging them in real-life conversations regarding how to make positive choices in and out of school. Positive affirming school messages hang on display across the building, and students share that the uplifting changes in the school, such as "a more peaceful school environment" and "improved student behavior" encourage them to want to be in school more. As a result, the school has witnessed a significant display of positive student behavior, decreased student suspensions, and improved academic student performance.
- Effective systems are in place to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of data analysis tools and assessment practices and make necessary modifications to ensure successful implementation of the Common Core Learning standards. (5.2)
 - o School leaders ensure that the use of rubrics, checklists, and other student assessment tools for progress monitoring are suitably reviewed during team, cabinet, and instructional meetings for alignment with tasks of the CCLS. As a result they are able to, evaluate results on classroom assessments and monitor student mastery of the curriculum. A major focus, centered on the implementation of the CCLS, includes tracking students' proficiency of comprehension skills, thus supporting improved outcomes for students. Consequently, teachers' monitoring of the alignment, integration, and tasks of the CCLS across the school allows for adjustments as needed.

- School leaders and faculty evaluate a variety of formal and informal assessment tools, such as teacher data binders that include homework, periodic assessment results, conference notes, and pre-and post unit assessments, that allow for tracking of student progress over time. Additionally, various forms of aggregated and organized computer generated attendance, behavioral, and instructional data, supports effective monitoring of the progress of specific students, leading to suitable adjustments, such as referring students for intervention and guidance support. Consequently, the school has been able to sufficiently address the immediate needs of all students, adjust assessments to include rigor such as critical thinking questions, and align them with the CCLS, resulting in improved proficiency for students.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen coherence and alignment of the curriculum with the Common Core Learning standards (CCLS) to ensure that academic tasks constantly emphasize higher order skills and are reflected across all grades subject areas and subgroups. (1.1)
 - The leadership, faculty, and external staff from the Network support teachers in adjusting curriculum maps to include higher order skills such as inferences, and in identifying strategies that promote students' achievement in key standards in writing and math. The school has aligned tasks to the CCLS and teachers receive professional development in creating challenging projects such as author studies that align with the standards and push students' thinking. However, observations of classrooms and student work hanging on display in the hall and classrooms reveals that there is not sufficient evidence of embedded rigorous habits, thus limiting both the enhancement of students' learning experiences and academic growth.
- Strengthen teaching practices so that diverse learners improve their performance via offered differentiated methodologies that include a broad range of entry points to improve thinking and learning. (1.2)
 - Some teachers plan differentiated lessons for students using data-informed processes, results from writing samples, and periodic assessments data, to guide planning. However, while the school facilitated training for teachers in Depth of Knowledge, (DOK), and teacher teams discuss differentiated tasks, varied tasks were not consistently reflected in all classes. Furthermore, the lack of higher order discussions did not suitably engage students, and student work products do not yet reflect high levels of student thinking.
 - In many classrooms students work in small groups or pairs and teachers use strategies such as writing prompts, "quick writes", to stimulate student thinking. However, observation of classrooms instruction, students' portfolios, and notebooks, suggest that not all students, especially struggling learners, receive tiered supports to enable them to extend their thinking and demonstrate consistent academic progression.
- Enhance the use of resources to ensure that students are engaged in challenging academic tasks that generate student meaningful work products and result in accelerated student learning. (1.3)
 - The principal's analysis of the school's English language arts data led to a strong emphasis on improving students' writing performance through a 90-minute ELA instructional block. Teachers are also scheduled for weekly common planning,

and teacher team meetings whereby faculty engages in the analysis of student work products, and develop tasks that align to the CCLS, and assessment data reflects improved instruction in literacy and math. Furthermore, although the school purchased novels and literacy resources to support the Saturday Academy, there are still some classrooms that do not contain a variety of instructional materials. Standards-based texts and other high interest literacy resources, to suitably engage and challenge students, are not sufficiently evident. As a result, students' meaningful work products do not reflect adequate gains in moving towards the school's instructional goals.

- Develop a cohesive system to ensure that teachers use on-going assessment practices in all subject areas so that appropriate instructional adjustments may be implemented. (2.2)
 - The school utilizes customized assessments such as rubrics that are aligned to the CCLS and the school's chosen key standards in literacy, including reading comprehension and writing skills. Rubrics support students in completing various assignments and tasks in many classes. Students comment that rubrics support their understanding of next steps in order to obtain a higher performance level on their assignments. However, although rubrics align with tasks and support teachers in making next step instructional decisions, rubrics are not meticulously created by all teachers to reflect rigorous criteria, nor do they provide feedback on the effectiveness of classroom level instructional decisions to support improve student outcomes.
 - Exit slips and post-its are used in some classes and subject areas to assist students to reflect on their learning, and help the teacher identify student mastery of tasks. However, assessment practices differ across the school and checks for understanding is not yet a uniform practice in all classes and subject classes, resulting in teachers' inability to sufficiently reflect on the effectiveness of classroom level decision making to make timely adjustments needed to further student learning.
- Develop stronger systems for monitoring teaching practice to ensure that teachers, including those new to the profession, receive meaningful feedback that supports next steps to improve practice. (4.1)
 - The leadership utilizes an observation tool that focuses on a research-based framework that has been shared with all staff. Short frequent informal walkthroughs vary in addressing identified domains of the framework and lead to written and verbal feedback regarding the effectiveness of teacher practice. However, written feedback in formal observations is often generic, does not sufficiently articulate clear expectations, nor target next steps, hindering the elevation of instructional practice and maximizing student learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Brian Piccolo	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score		X		
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		X		
1..2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?		X		
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?		X		
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?			X	
Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X	
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?		X		
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?		X		

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?		X		
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?		X		
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?		X		
1..4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	

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

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?		X		
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X	
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?		X		
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?		X		

Quality Review Scoring Key

UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed
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