

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Thomas S. Boyland School**

**Elementary-Middle School K073**

**251 MacDougal Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11233**

**Principal: Kenya Stowe**

**Dates of review: November 29 – 30, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Ainslie Cumberbatch**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Thomas S. Boyland School is an elementary-middle school with 422 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 80% Black, 18% Hispanic, 1% White, and less than 1% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 90.6%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School wide goals are monitored, focused on student outcomes, communicated to all constituents, and serve as the foundation to accelerate learning for all students. (3.1)
  - An improved school culture and current work around setting measurable goals is an outgrowth of a comprehensive needs assessment and continued dialogue that includes staff and parent forums such as “Breakfast with the Principal”, parent workshops, inquiry work, team meetings and conversations with students. In creating the current school wide goals, the administration incorporated various needs identified across the school, along with citywide expectations. This work led to a concise and public set of targets incorporated in the Comprehensive Educational plan (CEP) with action plans that drive organizational and instructional decision-making. The staff and parents along with the student government, school inquiry teams and the School Leadership Team (SLT) work to support this plan with ongoing monitoring and data based adjustments to support all students. Updates on school wide goals are shared with the school community through minutes, monthly parent meetings and a weekly staff newsletter. As a result, the school community recognizes a clear vision of the school's future development, along with various supports and resources and assists in meeting set targets to improve student learning.
- The school uses an efficient system for monitoring and adjusting teaching practice that provides strong support with a clear focus on improving instruction. (4.1)
  - Administrators conduct short, frequent classroom visits; informal and formal observations, “instructional rounds”, inter-visitations and periodic review of student work products. All feedback supports the school’s effort to improve teacher effectiveness in the classroom. For example, as part of the Teacher Effectiveness Pilot, teachers receive detailed feedback on specific areas of need such as in the area of higher-order questioning, which is a school-wide focus and the implementation of engaging classroom tasks. Teachers remark that they find the feedback, “Very helpful”. “It helps you know where you are and where you need to get to...” Consequently, there is considerable buy-in of the school’s efforts to improve teaching and learning, leading to some improvement in student mathematical thinking and problem solving skills noted in classroom visits.
  - Administrators use frequent classroom observations to support improvements in instructional practice. They emphasize a focus on differentiation of instruction, questioning and discussion techniques in observation reports and provide additional feedback to teachers using a research-based teaching tool. School leaders also align their feedback to teachers’ professional goals in observation reports and meet with teachers twice a year to discuss their progress towards meeting agreed

upon goals. As a result, teachers work to implement appropriate next steps to support improved academic achievement.

- Across the school, teachers assume leadership roles, participate in collaborative inquiry and use this work to strengthen instruction and raise students' learning outcomes. (4.2)
  - Common planning time scheduled twice a week allows all teachers to work in grade and inquiry teams to support and monitor student progress while deepening their knowledge of best instructional practices through collaboration with colleagues. For example, teachers in the middle school meet to review units of study and discuss plans for differentiation and targeted student development. As a result, teachers identify adjustments to units such as tiered questioning that foster increased student classroom participation. They remark, "The team structure is helpful...it allows us to share practices and strategies".
  - The principal assigns grade leaders to serve on her cabinet and provide feedback to their respective teams. These instructional leads organize team meetings and focus discussions around teacher practice and student progress. As such, these significant leadership roles build school level capacity and encourage staff buy-in of initiatives.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Develop greater coherence of rigor and alignment between curricula and State standards to ensure that all students make progress in their learning. (1.1)
  - Units of study that align to State standards are emerging across the school, include strategies to address the needs of various student groups, and suggestions for differentiating instruction. However, this alignment does not always lead to rigorous learning opportunities for students that promote higher-order thinking skills. For example, in a grade 6 English language arts class where students were working on writing an introductory paragraph to an essay, there were no apparent supports for struggling English language learners. In addition, teacher questions in some classes were low level, "What was the personal experience?" Also, "Is the topic too broad?" As a result, not all students stretch their thinking, which varies the level of student growth across the school.
  - Teachers participate in planning to align curricula to the evolving State standards to address the needs of varied groups of learners. However, the delivery of individual lessons does not always reflect that teachers have a clear understanding of how to tailor instruction so that all students engage in academic tasks that promote critical thinking. As such, some students receive fewer opportunities to build deep understanding of content or develop competency on given standards as evidenced in classroom tasks and in ELA and math proficiency scores on State assessments.
- Deepen differentiation of instruction based on data so that all lessons provide appropriate challenge to maximize student learning. (1.2)

- Teachers participate in the Teacher Effectiveness Pilot and plan to differentiate instruction using a variety of intervention strategies based on student performance, as evidenced by lesson and unit plans. For example, in an eighth grade English language arts (ELA) class on the topic of forensic science, students were allowed to assume the role of an anthropologist, engage in rich discussion and record the steps for solving the identity of a victim. Students were allowed to record information for small group discussion and large group share out using chart paper, or other methods. Similarly, in a seventh grade math class working on proportions, students were engaged in a jeopardy activity, which required them to solve and explain their answers to the class detailing their thinking. However, the level of differentiation varies across the school. For instance, in some classes all students receive the same instruction and material, regardless of their instructional needs. Thus, the lack of consistent differentiated lessons aligned to students' learning needs, limits students' thinking and engagement to promote college and career readiness skills, as evidenced in student work products.
- Revise the process of data analysis to establish a systematic and disaggregated review of student performance to support targeted instruction in order to increase learning outcomes for all students. (2.2)
  - Teachers reflect at specific intervals on various data streams from common periodic and classroom assessments. However, analysis of student progress toward goals across subgroups is not always evenly investigated. As a result, targeted interventions for specific groups of students such as English language learners (ELLs), holdovers and those in temporary housing are not always identified. Consequently, students' progress toward goals is hindered and opportunities to analyze data to inform immediate instructional adjustments to curricula and teaching practices that support the learning of all students are limited.
  - The use of rubrics and tools for peer and self-assessments during lessons, as well as other ways for teachers to determine student understanding, are inconsistent across classrooms with greater disparity in the middle school where the familiarity of Common Branch teachers with subject area content varies. Some classrooms show evidence of mini-assessments in the form of differentiated questions posed to specific students to gauge understanding, while others only involve surface level questions that require a simple procedural response. For example, "How did I get this answer?" and "What sign do we use?" or a request for the listing of facts from a given source were noted. Therefore, the inconsistent use of thoughtful ongoing classroom assessment practices to unearth students' understanding of content and concepts, via responses to questions, hamper teachers' ability to make immediate instructional adjustments as necessary to support students' learning needs, as evidenced in some classrooms.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Thomas S. Boyland School	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		X					
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?		X					
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?		X					
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?		X					
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?		X					
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?			X				
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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 <b>inquiry approach</b> that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
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?		X					
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>