

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Brighter Choice Community School**

**Elementary School K627**

**280 Hart St.  
Brooklyn  
NY 11206**

**Principal: Fabayo McIntosh**

**Dates of review: April 29-30, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Evelyn Santiago**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Brighter Choice Community School is an elementary school with 153 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 75% Black, 24% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 89.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school has created a warm and nurturing environment that promotes a culture inclusive of students, teachers and families who feel valued in having a voice in the school community. (1.4)
  - The principal has maintained the highly effective practice of greeting students and parents at the door each morning to ensure that they feel welcomed and valued at school, and has continued the school-wide ritual of the “Community Circle” meeting three times a week in the auditorium to extend positive relationships among all constituents and ensure that all students are known by every adult in the building. One of the “Community Circle” activities includes reciting the “CHOICE” pledge of Control, Honor, Obey, Independence, Contribute and Excellence to motivate and inspire positive behavior and good citizenship, while another includes praise and recognition of individual students’ social and academic accomplishments to reinforce high levels of performance. Additionally, students have opportunities in the “Community Circle” to voice concerns and suggestions to enhance school culture. The students’ input is considered by the principal and teacher leadership for adoption and implementation. One initiative proposed and implemented was the establishment of the “Student Hall Patrol” where selected students assist in directing hall traffic during morning, noon and dismissal times, ensuring that students move quickly to their designated locations and resulting in smooth transitions and increased time for classroom activities. The school has also established a “CARE” team comprised of the principal, teachers and the guidance counselor that convenes to discuss and address the needs of students referred for additional support. Parents of students discussed are invited to attend the meetings for their input and to keep them informed of the interventions planned for their children. On one occasion the team met to discuss a new student who was exhibiting extreme “shy” behavior with minimal interactions with teachers and peers and a reluctance to engage in school activities. After careful consideration of information and data gathered, the team paired the student with the guidance counselor who coordinated additional services that included a referral to the school’s partner clinic for group counseling. Consequently, the student increased his participation in the classroom and the school community and has demonstrated gains in literacy and math skills as measured by class assessments. To promote college and career readiness, the school has partnered with New York University and is planning group trips to the university this semester. As a result, the school has few recorded incidents so far this year, received a 9.0 score out of 10 in the most recent School Survey in the category of ‘Safety and Respect,’ and parents and students express that the school is like a “family”. “You can always call or reach out and someone will listen.” These efforts promote the social and emotional development of the students and facilitate the structures for continued academic success in school.

- The school's curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and engages all students in learning experiences that result in increased levels of achievement. (1.1)
  - The school has aligned the curriculum at all grade levels to State standards and the citywide instructional shifts with a focus on writing, increasing level of complexity in reading, increasing academic language and using evidence from text to support a position. Curriculum maps, developed by teachers, reflect CCLS and instructional shifts to promote college and career readiness. Teachers also use task bundles to design lessons and generate thinking and writing at high levels. For example, all classes participated in the school Science Fair and submitted projects reflective of the CCLS in science, reading and writing that demonstrate learning. During a science lesson, the students used information from resources such as 'Time for Kids' to learn about the effects of high temperatures on the Earth's environment and read articles on the "solar oven" to gather information for their new project. This activity generated peer conversations, thinking and sharing of ideas. In addition, the school has partnered with 'Studio in a School' organization to provide students greater exposure and learning in the visual arts. Many of the varied art projects and paintings created by the students are prominently displayed throughout the school. These experiences are resulting in student participation that includes students with disabilities and English language learners, of more rigorous and creative activities that require thinking, discussion and engagement to enrich and accelerate learning. This is evidenced in formative assessment outcomes and student work products that show students are making progress in content areas. The school has also made significant gains in student achievement as demonstrated by the State tests results that show an increase in scores of over 40% in English language arts and over 50% in math for the past two years.
  
- The school uses a common research based framework aligned to the curriculum to plan engaging learning activities that motivate students to increase their academic performance. (1.2)
  - Across classrooms the school uses the Danielson framework to improve instructional practices and plan effective lessons that reflect the school's belief about how students learn best. Teachers present lessons using the mini-lesson model and engage students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, in task assignments aligned to the curriculum standards. For example, in an English language arts class students discussed the use of sensory language to create mental images in two poems introduced by the teacher. Students then used sensory language to write their own original poems. In a lower grade class students used addition and subtraction operations to solve multi-step word problems and then students created their own multi-step word problems to share with the class. Additionally, teachers provide scaffolds to meet the varied needs of the students in their classrooms. In one class the teacher used pictures to illustrate vocabulary words and lesson concepts and provided more time for the student subgroup to complete the assigned tasks. In another class, the teacher paired students heterogeneously during group work to provide students support from peers to maximize the learning. The teacher then sat with a selected group of students performing at low levels for re-teaching and additional

instruction. This level of engagement and accommodation for individual and groups of students has yielded higher student success as measured by results of running records assessments in literacy and unit tests in math that indicate over 65% of students are approaching grade level proficiency in these subject areas.

- Teacher collaborations based on distributed leadership structures lead the focus on examining student work and analyzing student outcomes to improve instruction and increase student learning. (4.2)
  - All teachers participate in teacher teams that meet twice weekly and include multiple grades. The teams focus on planning instruction that is aligned to the CCLS and State assessment expectations and analyze task assignments and student work to identify areas for improvement and accommodate the learning needs of all students, especially student subgroups and target population students. Additionally, teachers share teaching strategies and conduct walkthroughs to improve instructional practices and maximize learning for all students. Following analysis of information gathered, the upper grade team discusses the progress made on the prior week's focus skill of answering inference type questions. Based on input from all members it was agreed that students needed further practice with inference skills to retrieve subtle information from text and correctly answer the questions. At the lower grade team meeting teachers analyzed a student's writing sample to discuss next steps for instruction and accommodation. Teachers determined that the student was struggling with formulating sentences, volume, punctuation and letter reversal. It was agreed that the student would review her own work and plan next steps with the teacher. The team also suggested providing tutoring support during lunch or prep periods, allowing additional time for the student to complete assignments and encouraging the student to write more about her ideas using a graphic organizer to develop her thoughts and frame her writing. This level of teacher planning and collaboration has improved instructional capacity and accelerated progress made by students, especially student subgroups, as evidenced by improvement in their work products and interim assessments results.
  - The school principal strongly supports providing opportunities to develop and promote teacher leadership. Teachers have been assigned to leadership roles that include an achievement specialist, inquiry team leaders and program coordinator. Teacher leaders are members of the school cabinet and meet with the school leadership weekly to inform and plan next steps. Teachers also attend workshops and receive training from network specialists. They share information with colleagues and conduct turn-key training at staff meetings. Additionally, teacher teams are given autonomy in planning curriculum and are encouraged to develop and use strategies that result in student learning. These structures promote and enhance teachers' decision-making capacity to plan instruction and improve classroom practices to increase student progress and achievement. Teachers express that they feel comfortable expressing their views in school-wide efforts to increase student performance at the highest levels.

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

- Extend assessment analysis in all content areas to monitor student progress toward goals and adjust instruction to maximize student learning. (2.2)
  - Classroom teachers and teacher teams use running records, content area unit tests, formative assessments, conference notes and periodic assessments reflective of the school's targeted standards to gather data. They then analyze results and make necessary curricula adjustments to support continued student growth. For example, after determining that students needed to increase academic vocabulary and include more details in their extended responses, teachers adjusted instruction to provide opportunities for students to practice and refine their language skills and improve performance. This included having students read their written work aloud in groups and during whole-class share to elicit comments from peers and expand their thoughts and content in the writing. In addition, teacher feedback to students includes written comments and suggestions on post it notes, test grades in content areas and one to one discussions to inform goals and next steps. Students use exit slips to give teachers feedback on lesson mastery. However, while analysis of student data, including information on English language learners and students with disabilities, is visible in most classrooms, it is not yet deeply imbedded in all. This limits the teachers' professional knowledge to adjust the learning for all students.
  
- Enhance systems in place in all content areas to evaluate school-wide initiatives, programs and policies to adjust practices and ensure student achievement. (5.1)
  - The principal collects student work and writing samples every six weeks and meets with teachers at least once a month to review classroom data, discuss student progress and next steps. The school also analyzes assessment results in Acuity, unit tests in literacy and math, running records in reading and formative assessments aligned to the CCLS to determine progress at the classroom and school levels. In addition, the principal conducts observations and walkthroughs to monitor the quality of instructional practices, alignment of the CCLS and use of Danielson framework across the school. Teachers also visit each other's classrooms and offer feedback to their colleagues on observed practices and areas for growth. Further, the principal meets with teachers one to one to discuss identified areas for professional growth and participates at teacher team meetings to monitor and support the teams' work. As a result of the information gathered from these conversations, inquiries and analysis, the school has selected a new reading and math program to implement in the fall that is better aligned to the CCLS. In addition, the principal and teachers decided to maintain the school's current writing program that is positively impacting student achievement in literacy and math. However, systems and structures for data analysis and evaluation of school-wide instructional protocols in social studies are not yet fully implemented to maximize efficacy. This decreases opportunities to adjust curricula, resources and practices to ensure student achievement in all content areas.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Brighter Choice Community School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			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>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed