

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Global Neighborhood Secondary School**

**04M381**

**240 East 109th Street  
New York, New York 10029**

**Principal: Luis Genao**

**Dates of review: May 30 – 31, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Debra Freeman**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Global Neighborhood School is a middle school with 149 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 31% Black, 56% Hispanic, 7% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 32% 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 90.4%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty ensure a safe and nurturing environment for students that support social, emotional, and academic development. (1.4)
  - After Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) data revealed increases in incidents, the school reinstated the Advisory class. Teachers received training from an “Educators for Social Responsibility” coach to support students with “Overcoming Obstacles,” and advisors meet with individual students to set goals that are tracked for progress weekly. This leads to planning student-led family conferences using a “Pre-Family Conference” tool. During the conference, students reflect upon report card grades, and revise their “Specific Measurable Attainable Realistic Timely (SMART) goals for the next quarter. One student shared that although this process “felt awkward at first, it [also] felt good for our character; we take the blame and the responsibility for our actions.” Additionally, the social worker, guidance counselor, and paraprofessional work together to address attendance issues with ongoing calls and home visits. This resulted in an increase to 92% in attendance to date, and a 40% decrease in lateness. The school also identifies a set of Core Values (Commitment to Community, Respect for Creative and critical Thought, Respect for Diversity, and Commitment to Self-Respect) that define classroom norms. For example, in one grade 6 Integrated Collaborative Teaching (ICT) classroom students worked in pairs to discern similarities and differences between two myths, the teacher alerted them to the norm their work aligned to “We listen to each other.” Furthermore, students choose an elective: Art, Musical Theater, or Band in sixth grade, a three-year commitment, the majority of students sustain. This, the principal shares, fosters resilience. Finally, the school’s partner, Princeton Blairstown Center (PBC), provides students with ongoing opportunities to learn about managing emotions. The principal shares that several trips to the PBC campgrounds throughout the year promote student “team building, self-awareness, and social-emotional literacy.” This results in a steady decline in Violence and Disruptive Incident Reporting System (VADIR) scores over the past three years from 1.33 in 2010-11 to .10 in 2012-13, and increased course completion students’ rates.
- School leaders and teachers make purposeful decisions to emphasize Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and to provide opportunities for all students to experience CCLS-aligned units of study and rigorous academic tasks. (1.1)
  - All curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and units and lesson plans emphasize the school’s key literacy standards: read complex informational texts closely to make logical inferences; cite textual evidence to support conclusions drawn from text; determine evidence to support an argument; and strengthen academic vocabulary to build reading proficiency. For example, one teacher revised a unit focused on one literary text to include several nonfiction texts representing varied perspectives on criminal behavior. This culminated in students defending the impact of nature or nurture on the root cause of gang behavior. In addition, though school leaders recognized the gains made by focusing deeply on writing using Writing Matters protocols, and are continuing the work this year, they also realized, based on Degrees of Reading Progress data, that greater focus on developing strong readers was needed. To this end, the sixth grade team, with the support of the school’s literary coach, designed a Common Core-aligned reading unit focused on: analysis of themes

across multiple texts, and comparing author's craft among different writers. Likewise, math units are developed and grounded in real world scenarios such as part time job salary calculations and family income spending. This leads to students who are prepared for the academic challenges they will encounter after middle school as evidenced in improved argument essay writing and reading comprehension scores.

- Across content areas, curricula emphasizes increased task rigor to engage students in higher-order thinking. For example, in one unit plan, students are required to read a sampling of nonfiction texts to determine how the ideas presented deters racism, and in a history unit, students conduct independent research (history of a civil rights movement), share learning with peers, and create "media awareness campaigns." Furthermore, one math task reviewed required students to use multiple representations to express linear equations, and another to represent cost effective decisions in graphs or tables. Many math tasks culminate in applying knowledge to a real-world task (organizing a dinner for family). In an English class visited, students worked in pairs to infer how the author reveals a character's internal conflict against contradictory actions. One student shared that the character "wanted to cry, but couldn't because his father looks up to him; he has to protect his family now. The conflict is Peter versus himself." This built from the previous day's work to mine the text for evidence. Another student reflected, "We are forced to think about why a character made the decision he did." Consequently, all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWD) have access to CCLS-aligned tasks that result in higher order thinking and engagement. In addition, a review of student writing over several months in grades 6 and 8 showed growth made in developing effective arguments based in evidence.
- A variety of assessment tools used consistently across the school inform teachers of students' academic needs and lead to curricula and instructional adjustments that improve learning outcomes for all students. (2.2)
  - The school uses an array of assessments such as: the Writing Matters Data Tracker, Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) assessments, conference notes, and common rubrics (Writing Matters, Engage NY) to monitor student progress, assess student work, and adjust curricula for alignment to the school's key standards. Advisors maintain records of students' goals from quarter to quarter, and parents are informed of student achievement in Progress Reports distributed four times a year. Additionally, teachers use the school's Data Driven Instructional Tool (DDIT) to identify an assessment and intervention (small group work, retaking a quiz, meeting after school) for individual or groups of students. Ongoing assessments are familiar to students who articulate task expectations and next steps: checking work before submitting, or, as one student shared, "getting too focused on [mathematical] terms," and not on problem solving. Several students shared that they receive regular teacher feedback on their work and can identify areas for improvement by pointing to the rubrics accompanying all work. Teachers adjust units and lesson plans to target specific skills such as: using academic language, embedding quotes in writing, and online graphing techniques in mathematics. The Writing Tracker tracks student's ability to defend a claim with evidence, and helps all content area teachers to adjust lessons to target literacy skills (model highlighting or working with a graphic organizer). Individual teachers and teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data to inform lessons and unit plans so that the CCLS-aligned tasks and curricula meet students where they are. One student noticed, "we are reading [higher level] texts so that we are prepared for high school." This

ongoing focus resulted in grades 6 and 7 showing progress in editorial and argumentative writing and an increase from 22 students in 2010-11 to 38 students performing at a level 3 or higher in mathematics in 2011-12.

- School leaders make strategic decisions about the use of resources and programs to support school-wide goals aligned to the needs of all students to improve student literacy and result in meaningful work products. (1.3)
  - Two of the school's long term goals are to increase teacher's instructional capacity to elevate rigor in instruction and to focus on literacy development for all students. The school is in its second year of the Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI). Data from the first year's assessments, raised faculty awareness that 37% of their students were reading independently at a first or second grade level. This led to fully opting in to "Wilson" and "Just Words" and recognizing the need for a comprehensive approach to improve reading comprehension. The running records used in year one, also surfaced areas of need for English Language Learners (ELLs) in vowels and vocabulary targeted by these programs. In addition, the school partners with "Writing Matters" for support in aligning curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards, coaching teachers to improve instruction, and engaging students in the writing process through technology (the school provided all incoming sixth graders and their families with computers). Based on Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) results from October 2012 to May 2013, the majority of students enrolled in either of the two programs, have moved up at least one quartile and increases in students reaching quartile 4. In addition, ELL students who were enrolled in these two programs increased their reading and writing scores 23 points on average, thus, resulting in improved student work products.
  - In reviewing the needs of students, the principal made several programming adjustments. First, it was determined that students need more teacher-to-student consistency and the principal rescheduled teachers to remain with the same group of students for two years. Second, teachers with more expertise in content and routines are placed with students who need such support. Third, after not meeting Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science, the principal reprogrammed science classes so that additional afternoon sessions target discipline-specific concepts and skill building with small groups of students. Fourth, two groups of students have been moved from 12:1:1 to ICT classes and, as evidenced in a classroom where two students who made this transition were eager to join in a share out of text themes, impacts student engagement. Finally, grade, cabinet, and department teams meet regularly to target students for additional support. Because of these consistent team structures, teachers take responsibility for a cohort of students, and target and monitor assessment data to determine interventions. These practices result in greater rigor in instruction, alignment to the school's instructional goals and purposeful academic support for students with disabilities.

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

- Strengthen questioning and discussion techniques across classrooms so that all students have multiple entry points into challenging content and tasks, demonstrate high levels of thinking, and are cognitively engaged. (1.2)
  - The principal believes that students learn best when they are engaged in "challenging yet accessible activities" that are "aligned to the Common Core

- Learning Standards” and when “instructional tasks take into account ability level.” This belief system is manifested in the school’s focus on planning and preparation that is inclusive of all learners. For example, in ELA and ICT classes visited, all students filled out Venn diagrams to compare and contrast texts, or to identify contradictory character traits. In several classrooms visited, students were paired by mixed ability levels to support each other, and, in one math class groups worked on alternate versions of a task. Students articulated their thinking, all had the same support to aid in comprehension, and were engaged in their learning. However, less consistent were tasks that provided multiple entry points into content to challenge all learners, including high performers, thus resulting in fewer opportunities for all students to consistently demonstrate higher-order thinking in work products.
- In some classrooms visited students were grouped by content level (one student supports the other’s learning) or skill (one student is organized, the other focused) and during “turn and talk”, students discussed texts and collaborated on tasks. However, in most class discussions teachers generated questions directed to individual students. Students responded to the questions, but were not always asked to elaborate on how they arrived at an answer, nor were other students invited to agree, add, or refute the response. This results in limited opportunities for all students to engage in peer discussions, or to generate their own questions that would demonstrate high levels of thinking and participation.
  - Continue the work of teacher team collaborations that provide opportunities for focused professional development and collegial conversations aligned to school goals that improve teacher practice and student learning. (4.2)
    - Teacher teams meet regularly: in grade teams where looking at student work and assessment data drives intervention planning; in department teams where Common Core curricula is designed and adjusted; and in the cabinet team, where work is delegated to subcommittees focused on the school’s instructional goals and to address social and emotional student needs. All teams engage in protocols for looking at student work and data (warm and cool feedback, what-so-what-now what), targeting students for interventions and support, and adjusting curricula to meet the needs of student learners and improve academic performance. For example, “Teaching Matters” offered professional development on creating text-dependent questions, and this led to teachers providing feedback to each other on the questions they created. One teacher shared that the team helped her to revise her prompt for closer alignment to the standards. In the grade team meeting attended, teachers reviewed low inference notes from peer observations and aligned evidence to the Danielson Framework. One teacher noted that “planning questions ahead of time helped me,” and another shared that the team has shifted its focus from content comprehension, to the structure and craft of multiple texts. In discussions about students with disabilities, teachers spoke of the gains in reading and how they identified students who scored below 45 on the baseline. This led to teachers, adjusting curricula to focus on note taking as a support. During the ELA meeting, one teacher shared that the school-wide literacy focus led to more students using transition words and details in their writing. However, teams have not yet maximized their professional knowledge in cohesive, school-wide instructional practices that put students at the center of learning, and this limits opportunities for all students to gain mastery of goals set for them.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Global Neighborhood 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>