

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Brian Piccolo Middle School**

**Q53**

**1045 Nameoke Street  
Queens  
NY 11691**

**Principal: Shawn Rux**

**Dates of review: April 11-12, 2013  
Lead Reviewer: Michele Lloyd-Bey**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Brian Piccolo Middle School 53 is a middle school with 449 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 64% Black, 35% Hispanic, 1% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. 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

- School leaders and teachers align its curricula to key standards, with rigorous tasks that are refined to provide students with diverse learning experiences that successfully close the achievement gap for all learners. (1.1)
  - During teacher team, and instructional meetings, staff develops unit of study plans that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), including the expectations of the instructional shifts. They use data informed processes, such as the analysis of summative and formative data to identify key standards in reading and writing for all grades. Teams collaborate and work closely with the Children's First Network team to design rigorous and coherent curricular. Unit plans are then used for teachers to collaboratively develop lesson plans that effectively align with the time frame for each unit of study. Teacher teams effectively embed open-ended rigorous questions within unit plans that push students' thinking. For example, students engage in rigorous performance tasks that address the impact of Hurricane Sandy by responding to evaluative and analytical questions that induce their thinking about storms. Furthermore, teachers routinely ensure that rubrics and resources are included in each unit of study, and constantly adjusted, such as "tweaking" assessments to ensure the successful implementation of the curricular. For example, grade 7 teachers adjust their grade's unit of study to sufficiently incorporate effective strategies, such as, *movement*, for males in their single gender classes. Teachers also use the analysis of student work following each unit to include additional graphic organizers, re-word questions for students with disabilities, and 'chunk' the work within the unit for English language learners (ELL's). Additionally, teachers use on-line support to identify various kinds of resources that successfully align with their unit of study plans and effectively align with each standard across the grades in English language arts and math. As a result, the school's curricular effectively support the citywide instructional shifts to close the achievement gap, and promote college and career readiness as evidenced in curricular maps, unit plans and student work.
- The school engages in partnerships, schedules time and utilizes its limited budget to make effective organizational decisions that positively align with the instructional goals of the school and increase student learning outcomes. (1.3)
  - The principal creatively targets all resources such as community partnerships and scheduling time for teacher team work, towards improving student achievement, meeting the instructional goals of the school and maintaining a deliberate focus on the citywide instructional expectations. The principal ensures that effective computer-generated literacy and math programs remain in place to continue to support the school's instructional goals, and provide excellent academic support for English language learners (ELL'S) and students with disabilities (SWD's) . Based on Acuity assessment data, academic support programs in literacy help students improve their language acquisition skills, and address their individual weaknesses in English language arts (ELA). Additionally, the

tremendous partnership support from *New York Cares* enabled the school to provide a Saturday Academy with tutoring services for struggling learners, to support them in achieving their instructional goals. As a result, 78 of the 105 grade 6 through 8 students in attendance at the Saturday Academy made significant gains in ELA and math, thus exemplifying the commitment to high expectations that demonstrate improvement in student achievement.

- Teachers are programmed to meet on horizontal and vertical teams at least once weekly; in addition to this, teachers share that they constantly meet to exchange ideas and plan effective lessons for students. Their time together enables them to engage in collaborative planning and successfully address the implementation of CCLS, analyze data, and evaluate student work. Teachers on grade 6 meet three times a week and use their time constructively to analyze tasks, and independently solve math equations, in order to identify exactly where they need to target their planning and make adjustments to curricular. These teachers articulate that they keep in mind the shifts and continually build in rigor in tasks, which enable students to make real-life connections. As a result, students benefit from focused, data-driven instructional planning.
- The school develops and uses common assessments aligned to the curriculum to monitor the performance of students in order to inform adjustments and appropriate instructional decisions to raise achievement. (2.2)
  - The leadership and staff routinely develop and utilize a range of formative assessments that are used to make classroom level decisions. Across classrooms, common rubrics, such as end of unit assessments, are used to evaluate student performance tasks and provide students with feedback toward their next steps. During team meetings, rubrics are adjusted to take into account increased rigorous criteria and ensure alignment to the curricula and the school's targeted standards. Math teachers provide rigorous problem solving tasks to students using "exemplars". All exemplar tasks are graded at the medium to high rigor level using the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) task complexity rubric. Teams work collaboratively to select, administer and norm their instruction. For example, during the grade 7 team meeting, teachers used their rubric to analyze and track student achievement on performance tasks. They identified the lack of specific information noted in tasks and made adjustments to rubrics and curricular that enables students to have more practice in this area. Benchmark assessments help the school identify students in need of additional support based on item skill analysis and meet the learning needs of a diverse group of students, including ELL's and SWD's. School leaders and teachers analyze grade and class assessment data every 4 to 6 weeks and have identified *making inferences*, *number sense and operations*, as negative trends in student performance. This has prompted focused instructional planning and small group student support in these areas. Consequently, across the school students are provided with data based feedback, thus allowing them to know and understand their strengths and weaknesses hence improving their ability to self-assess and amplify the quality of their work.

- The school uses a common teaching framework for observing classroom instruction, that captures the needs of teachers and provides effective feedback and next steps that improve teacher practice. (4.1)
  - This school year, the principal developed and utilizes a common observation tool that successfully enables school leaders to effectively observe and support teacher practice, based on the Danielson Framework for teaching. The administrative team met early in September to establish norms and school wide instructional expectations for the observation of teachers' classroom instruction. To ensure that all teachers are well aware of the framework, the school conducted continuous discussion and professional development. The framework is used to promote the instructional goals of the school by focusing on key topics such as, "Establishing a Culture for Learning", "Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques", and "Engaging Students in Learning". Each topic is addressed in daily observation of classrooms to conduct short frequent snapshots, informal and formal observations with effective feedback, to promote professional growth in teacher practice. Teachers receive effective feedback, within 48 hours based on the analysis of their practice that is documented in writing and/or shared during one-to one conversations. At the end of each cycle, teachers complete a reflection feedback form that is referenced during an individual conference with the principal, to collaboratively discuss the teacher's growth within the cycle. The leadership also evaluates teacher growth in practice in relation to student performance that includes assessments and student work samples. Thus, the school is able to immediately identify the needs of teachers and offer timely support such as individualized coaching, and classroom inter-visitation opportunities. The school is highly focused on the growth of all teachers, including teachers new to the school, and improvement in teacher practice is determined based on the continuous progression of teacher growth indicated in snapshots that lead to satisfactory formal observations, and result in improved student outcomes.

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

- Strengthen instructional practices across all classrooms, that articulates a common belief so all that students, engage in lessons with appropriate extensions and scaffolds that deepen their learning. (1.2)
  - In a grade 6 grade ELA class, students engage in a standards- based lesson with text reading and discussion from the book, *The Lightning Thief*. Students work in small skills- based groups and review a previous instructional anchor chart and discuss the things that "Close Readers" do, make inferences, cite text-based evidence, and deepen their understanding regarding character analysis. Additionally, the teacher asks many effective questions that align with the school's common teaching framework, and is able to generate high level thinking and student discussion. However, while many of the common belief structures such as grouping, and modeling, are in place in many classrooms, the deep analysis of text that promote active engagement, and high levels of participation through purposeful questioning is

inconsistent. As a result, instructional practices do not yet accurately address the academic needs for all students and progress is not appropriately accelerated as evidenced in the lack of student movement in literacy and math in some special needs classrooms.

- Teachers use assessment item skill analysis information to group students and ensure that lessons are differentiated. Students indicate that their groups are flexible and based on their specific needs. In an English language learner class, students engage in teacher created learning centers that effectively target each student's entry points. The school also utilizes a research-based computer-generated literacy program that generates key questions, and provides effective scaffolds and extensions to support the individualized instructional needs of English language learners. In some classes, particularly content specific classes, students work in small groups, however there is no evidence that the activities in the groupings are differentiated to address their multiple entry points and enable the appropriate level of scaffolds and extensions at their specific instructional levels. Consequently, the lack of tasks aligned to the instructional needs of all students limit their cognitive ability to engage in appropriate level support for higher-order thinking skills in order to increase their academic achievement.
- Build systems to regularly evaluate coherence between curricular and instructional practices and assess quality of school culture to support alignment to the CCLS. (5.1)
  - School leaders and staff consistently monitor, evaluate and make adjustments to school level curricular and organizational decision making, and ensure that all constituents are sufficiently aware of the implementation, and expectations of the CCLS. They use venues such as cabinet, and teacher team meetings to analyze summative and formative data in order to make adjustments, such as revising rubrics, and deciding which resources best support the instructional program across grades. The curriculum goes through iterations of cycles of adjustments, mostly in English language arts and math, which are discussed at the grade, departmental, and cabinet level. They use information gained from their evaluation to implement new instructional programs, make adjustment to afterschool programs, create additional incentives, and adjust on-line assessments in order to obtain succinct performance data on students. However, school leaders and staff have not fully addressed the quality of school culture and the ways expectations are established among school constituents to address the expectations of the CCLS, resulting in limited coherence between what is taught and how it is taught in order to guide student achievement.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Brian Piccolo Middle School 53	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>