



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Brighter Choice Community School

Elementary K627

**280 Hart Street
Brooklyn
NY 11206**

Principal: Fabayo McIntosh

**Date of review: November 21, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Kristine Mustillo**

The School Context

Brighter Choice Community School is an elementary school with 149 students from Pre-Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 81% Black, 17% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.1%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	Additional Findings	Well Developed
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Focus	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Celebration	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school effectively communicates high expectations, encouraging families and teachers to work collaboratively toward improving student achievement. Administration consistently sets high standards for classroom practice through on-going training on the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact

Parents, staff, and students work in partnership and are mutually accountable for student achievement leading to a clear path towards college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's morning mantra is "Every Child, Everyday, College-bound." To help students develop meaningful personal aspirations and understanding of pathways to college, the school schedules visits for students and families to college campuses and hosts workshops for families on financial planning for higher education. Most recently, students and their families visited New York University, touring housing, classes, libraries, and offices.
- The school offers regular workshops for parents on extended day parent engagement Tuesdays. Teachers lead workshops on emerging literacy, math games and a number of other topics through an in-classroom approach. Parents work alongside their children on classroom projects in literacy and mathematics. Early childhood teachers conducted a workshop on "Reading with your Child" focusing on the use of questioning to promote parent-child conversations about books. Workshops at the beginnings of units allow parents to become familiar with culminating project rubrics and view samples of what work looks like at each performance level so that they can better support students at home.
- The school trains staff to use collaborative inquiry and protocol tools for looking at student work. Teacher teams meet regularly and use these protocols to examine student work and discuss implications for instruction. Inquiry teams run in six eight-week cycles. The school's clearly defined professional learning standards require teacher teams to present their learning and results fostering a sense of mutual accountability for improving pedagogy and student outcomes. Teamwork focusing on increasing student engagement has resulted in the inclusion of tiered questions within lesson plans and expanded the use of supports and extensions in instruction yielding improvements in students' engagement in conversation and higher order thinking tasks.
- The school trains teachers to unpack the Danielson Framework for Teaching through collaborative norming of instructional videos. Teachers also use classroom inter-visitiation to observe colleagues' practices and receive on-going feedback in regularly scheduled cycles of observation conducted by administration and teacher learning teams. Observations are linked to school-wide and individualized professional development plans and to frequent professional learning time linked to inquiry cycles enabling teachers' immediate practice and support for newly learned skills to improve their pedagogy.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

While the school's belief in small group and individualized instruction drives pedagogical practice and provision of consistent instructional supports, as well as questioning and discussion techniques, practices are not always anchored in entry points and extensions that foster deep reasoning on student work products.

Impact

Teaching strategies are not yet consistently strategic enough to offer high quality supports and extensions so that all students, especially higher-level students, engage in meaningful and challenging activities regularly.

Supporting Evidence

- The school provides a range of small group instruction opportunities for students, including Saturday Academy, extended day model after-school, and Reading Recovery. Each Friday, students work for a period on Bright Works packets, which are designed, based on their individual learning needs. During this time, students with disabilities receive targeted instruction in groups of no more than five. However, it is not always clear how Bright Works packets support more challenging work for advanced students and how targeted learning time strategies are incorporated daily to foster critical thinking for various learners.
- All culminating projects include multiple ways for students to demonstrate understanding. Projects are largely team-based, fostering conversations with peers around content and allowing students to assume responsibility for various roles. In addition to creating final projects, students are also asked to give oral presentations and are given feedback in multiple areas. An early childhood transportation unit task required students to create a transportation model, write an informational piece, and give an oral presentation. Upper-grade students worked in teams to prepare presentation boards on the government structures of selected Central American countries.
- Across classrooms, teachers used questioning, modified text, and graphic organizers to give students access to content and support in producing high quality work products. Students in a Kindergarten math class worked in partners to find multiple ways to make 10. Higher-level students had the opportunity to explore word problems related to making 10. A second grade class was working on a book study, Owl Moon, and developing questions of varying levels for their classmates. In other classrooms, graphic organizers and small group check-ins were broadly used but with a focus largely on support rather than extension.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across grades and content areas, curricula is aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts to give all students access to rigorous tasks that promote college and career readiness.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions build coherence in lesson planning across grade and content areas promoting academic tasks and thinking essential to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Staff recognized a need for students to have additional leveled literacy instruction beyond the adopted Teachers College literacy program and created curricula for academic support during intervention periods and for home use. Staff selected Imagine It on-line resources to provide students at-home access, trained parents in the use of the on-line materials, and offered at-home support strategies. The program is also used during Friday Bright Works periods to provide individualized instruction. Teacher teams meet regularly to evaluate curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts to ensure students are receiving support in accessing all standards, supplementing as needed.
- Teachers use Kim Marshall's Backward Design process in planning units of study. All unit plans have culminating tasks with high-level Depth of Knowledge tasks. All lesson plans include essential questions that scaffold up. All lesson plans include plans for student groups with a workshop model approach. For example, an upper grade class participated in a study on Central America, exploring the school system and government structures resulting in a presentation by groups that evaluated the fairness of the structures. Previously, students were involved in a comparison study of United States and Central American structures and an in-depth exploration of schooling, politics, and policy.
- Teacher teams use protocols, such as, "What? So What? Now What?" to explore student performance and design future instruction to increase mastery. In the team observed, teachers used student information to decide upon student grouping and the instructional next steps for each of those groups in English language arts. Rigorous habits were embedded in the goals for each group of students discussed and included building reading stamina, improving comprehension, expressing comprehension verbally, and writing using text based evidence to support claims.

Findings

Across all classrooms, teachers administer common assessments every six to eight weeks in English language arts and mathematics and consistently use varied practices to check for understanding.

Impact

Teachers' astute daily assessment coupled with frequent opportunities for student self-assessment effect critical adjustments to meet all students' needs. School-wide and classroom data show groups of students making qualitative and quantitative gains in both English language arts and mathematics.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher's College reading inventories are used to provide information on student fluency and comprehension. Conference notes are used daily and running records conducted regularly to provide current information on student performance and allow for flexible grouping and re-teaching. Students are engaged in regular conversation with their teachers and their peers around their instructional next steps in literacy.
- Students use rubrics to reflect on project and task performance. There are regular opportunities for students to self-assess and peer assess during the writing process, math explorations, and unit projects. In math, students use a jigsaw rubric for problem solving, reasoning, communication, connections and representation. Students self-reflect, highlight the areas where they feel their performance fell and receive feedback from their teachers during conferences. In a social studies class, students received feedback from their peers on their oral presentations using an oral presentation rubric.
- Benchmark assessments in English language arts and mathematics show students making progress gains from September through November, with 70-90% of students in each class now performing at Levels 2 and 3 when previously over 90% of students were performing at Levels 1 and 2. Benchmark assessments are used to inform Response to Intervention (RTI) services and support cycles.
- Exit slips are used across grades and content areas and provide teachers with up-to-date information that is used to adjust grouping and instruction for the next day. All classrooms visited had a form of an exit ticket that was used to assess student learning for the lesson.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

All teachers engage in inquiry work through weekly structured professional collaborations around instructional practice and student performance.

Impact

As a result of professional collaboration and supports, teacher improvement, as noted in Advance reports, contributes to instructional coherence school-wide. Benchmark data and classroom level data show groups of students making qualitative and quantitative gains towards mastery of goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher Teams meet several times each week to look at student work, make curricula adjustments and discuss instructional strategies using Common Core Learning Standards as a guide to assess and adjust. They use protocols when looking at student work to inform grouping and instructional next steps.
- Teachers participate in book studies to explore both theory and practice collaboratively. The current book is Teach like a Champion. Teachers are discussing promising practices from neighboring schools that can be implemented.
- Inquiry teams take place in cycles. School-wide, teachers share their learning at the end of each cycle. The work of inquiry teams has led to pacing changings, the integration of supplemental instructional materials, the selection of RTI approaches and the creation of a toolbox that teachers use to provide multiple access opportunities for students.
- Instructional coherence has improved with all teachers adapting Common Core Learning Standards aligned to curricula to meet the needs of their students. Lesson planning consistently includes “big ideas” and “essential questioning” in a workshop model. Teacher observation reports show effective and highly effective practice ratings in the targeted domain, improving questioning and discussion techniques. School-wide, teachers include leveled questioning in their lesson plans and use role assignments to increase student engagement in task assignments and discussions. Across classrooms students facilitated group discussions in English language arts, math and social studies and generated questions for their peers in science and English language arts.