



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

**Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning**

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Brian Piccolo**

**Middle School Q053**

**10-45 Nameoke Street  
Queens  
NY 11691**

**Principal: Shawn Rux**

**Date of review: December 3, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Mary Barton**

## The School Context

Brian Piccolo is a middle school with 348 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 58% Black, 36% Hispanic, 3% White, 1% Asian and 2% Multi-Racial students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.4%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Clear and effective communication is connected to college and career readiness through a successful partnership with students and families. School leaders and staff consistently communicate a united set of expectations and provide focused feedback for all learners to ensure that they are prepared for the next level of education.

### Impact

The school has established a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to students and families and provides supports to achieve those expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal is leading the work around communicating to students and families that students need to be in school on a daily basis in order to learn. Students and staff wear sweatshirts that say “Education Save Lives” or “Learn or Die”. Students spoke about how the principal consistently communicates the importance of attending school in order to learn and achieve so that they can move on to the next grade, high school and beyond. Parents are contacted on a daily basis if their child is absent from school. The principal greets students daily as they enter school. Students shared that they appreciate that there are high expectations for them and that adults care about their future.
- Students and the school community live by the credo, “students who achieve good grades earn respect.” This credo is depicted on a large mural on the first floor of the school. The school has partnered with a video company and members of the school community (students, staff and community members) have performed in music videos that are shown to students regularly on a television on the first floor. The school culture has changed to a place where student learning is valued and it is cool to come to school and to participate in class discussions and to share work with one another. Daily attendance has increased to almost 92% to date from 90.4% in 2013-14.
- Data boards are in all classrooms to inform students of their data and students are expected to, with guidance from teachers, create goals to address their strengths and areas of focus. These goals are discussed in advisory and other meetings and updated after completed units of study.
- Monthly newsletters go home to parents outlining upcoming events as well as expectations for success for that month. Parent workshops are provided by Urban Arts, as well as school staff around academics and social and emotional supports.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

### Impact

Across classrooms, student work products, including the work of students with disabilities and English language learners lead to uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and uneven demonstration of higher order thinking skills in student discussion and work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- In an eighth math classroom, the questioning around congruence and related notation was conducted entirely by the teacher with students answering the teacher and were not provided opportunities to engage in discussions about the content with one another. As a result, there was a lack of a higher order thinking discussion for students to stretch their learning during this class.
- In a seventh grade social studies classroom, the teacher was asking students questions about a primary source document on John Winthrop's sermon with no opportunity to share their thinking with classmates or to build upon each other's thinking. Students were then asked to write out the answers to questions using the same text. All students were working on the same assignment thereby showing inconsistent entry points for all learners.
- In a sixth grade math classroom, while the teacher provided opportunities for students to work on assignments that met their entry points, students still did not have consistent opportunities to discuss their thinking with one another although they were seated in groups which would have enabled them to do so.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work products and data.

### Impact

Curricula units promote college and career readiness and build coherence across the school so they are accessible to a variety of learners including English language learners and students with disabilities. Administration and faculty continue to make curricula revisions so that learners have access to tasks that are cognitively engaging.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school uses Connected Math Program 3 (CMP3) as the main math resource for math, but teachers found that CMP3 did not address all of the instructional shifts and decided to supplement the curricula with tasks from Engage New York which serves as a resource for the use of strategies, exemplars and also provides an analysis of state exam questions and rubrics to ensure that tasks and assessments are Common Core aligned. Mathematical shifts are incorporated in unit plans with students having consistent exposure to real-world problem solving, as well as to work with students so that their exhibit fluency as they problem solve and share their thinking.
- The school uses Expeditionary Learning as the main resource for the English language arts curricula. Teachers value the themes that the literature in the program communicates and enables students to study deeply with support. With a significant portion of the student body struggling with basic reading skills, the school has instituted guided reading instruction to students. Teachers have received training in executing guided reading instruction and students receive small group reading lessons several times a week. Additionally, students have time built into their program for independent reading on a daily basis with teachers checking in to ensure that students are reading appropriately leveled literature.
- Teachers across the school utilize Understanding by Design and differentiated instruction and plan lessons with the end in mind. They develop units of study and lessons with the summative assessment question and work backwards to ensure that curricula is sufficiently rigorous, yet also provides the supports needed for particular groups of students.
- Teacher led teams work collaboratively to refine curricula maps on Atlas Rubicon, the school's online curricula mapping system. Additionally, all teachers have access to the community Google Docs accounts, whereby adjustments and modifications are made. Teachers are provided with 90 minute planning sessions weekly to develop Common Core aligned lessons and tasks using the school's Common Core aligned resources. Curricula units were viewed in the core subject areas as well as in the arts and in character education which students take classes in daily. For example, in English language arts, teachers are pairing novels with informational text from Expeditionary Learning in all grades to enable students to have exposure to a balance of fiction and non-fiction text, as well as complex text with academic vocabulary. Unit plans also indicate that writing tasks are completed as both formative and summative assessments with supports provided such as graphic organizers and conferences with students.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Teachers have collaboratively developed common assessments and rubrics aligned with the school's curricula with the resulting data used to revise units of study. The school utilizes common assessment data to track student progress towards goals.

### **Impact**

Actionable feedback is provided to students that are rubric-based and enabling students and teachers to have a clear picture of progress. Teachers utilize student work and data trends to adjust units and curricula.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Students state they receive rubrics before starting an assignment across most of their classes and subjects. They also state that teachers give them feedback through the rubrics and that this helps them to know their next steps using the feedback to improve their work. In a review of student work on bulletin boards, portfolios and during the student meeting, rubrics are used across all core subjects and feedback to students was provided with teachers clearly indicating what feedback was applicable to a particular component of the work. For example, specific feedback on student writing content in social studies was seen consistently, as well as feedback around mechanics.
- Teachers collaborate once a week during common planning time to analyze student data based on common grade-wide assessments. English language arts (ELA) teachers also assess student reading levels three times yearly using the Scantron Performance Series in grade 6 and the Teachers College Assessment Pro in grades 7 and 8. Work from common assessments are kept in portfolios around each core subject area and teachers track student progress using a school portfolio checklist. Additionally, ELA teachers indicate student progress on data boards that are kept in classrooms which measure the growth of student reading levels. Teachers discuss results from the data and determine next steps making adjustments to unit plans and lessons to meet students' needs. Teachers also group students based on data with re-teaching provided for those who require it, as well as enrichment activities for the students who are ready for them. Students create goals for themselves based on the data boards in the classrooms with teachers conferencing with students periodically on the progress of their goals.
- The school has a clearly defined grading policy by departments. These policies are shared with students and are posted in all classrooms. All students, with the support of their teachers in their academic classes as well as in advisory, have worked on leading student conferences around their performance and progress toward their goals and did so at the recent parent teacher conferences. The practice of having students lead conferences will take place again during the spring parent teacher conferences. Students reported that they felt proud of the fact that they were able to share their work and progress with their families and that through this process had a much better picture of how well they are doing in school, as well as their next steps for success. Teachers also have a clear picture of student progress and mastery through this process.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

The principal ensures that the majority of teachers engage in ongoing content area professional collaborations that promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts, to align practices to the school's instructional focus, and to analyze assessment data.

### Impact

Collaboration of teacher teams results in promoting the progress of school level goals for diverse learners and the strengthening of teacher practice.

### Supporting Evidence

- Instructional staff members engage in 90 minutes of common planning time every week and an additional 80 minutes every other week. During this time, teachers analyze lesson plans, develop common lesson plans per grade and subjects, create tasks, create common assessments, and analyze student work. In addition, teacher teams also engage in the planning, providing and receiving of professional learning.
- Across the school, teachers use protocols to analyze and discuss student work which result from common assessments and performance tasks across the grade. Item analysis data is compiled and shared from common assessments including pre, post and mid unit assessments and performance trends across items and classes, which impact future lesson and unit planning.
- At a sixth grade math team meeting, teachers utilized a clearing protocol so that members could learn what was on each other's mind as they walked into the meeting. Then they used a collaborative assessment conference protocol to look at student work from a presenting teacher's class. In looking at the real world math problem solved by the student, teachers took turns looking at the strategies utilized by the student and identified trends that emerged from their analysis. The team then discussed implications for future lessons and the revisions that would be incorporated to their current unit plan, which included more explicit instruction, by breaking down the components of problems and modeling thinking aloud for students. Teachers reported that they appreciate the opportunity to share in the planning process with each other, which helps to ensure that students are exposed to coherent curricula.
- Teachers shared that their team work has had an impact on student learning, specifically in the English language arts department. For instance, when they studied a writing task from a recent Expeditionary Learning unit that students had worked on and many had difficulty with, teachers found that once they had broken down the task for students, they were able to successfully complete similar future tasks with more ease. Teachers determined that they needed to break down the directions more clearly, as well as to model writing responses in which students needed to make claims and counterclaims using information from multiple texts. Teachers made note of this adjustment within an upcoming unit plan and were then able to meet students at their entry points by providing specific supports that enabled them to access future tasks.