



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

M.S. 053 Brian Piccolo

Middle School Q053

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

Principal: Shawn Rux

**Date of review: May 3, 2016
Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth**

The School Context

M.S. 053 Brian Piccolo is a middle school with 317 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 58% Black, 38% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 15% English Language Learners and 36% students with disabilities. Boys account for 59% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 90.2%.

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	Proficient
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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Focus	Developing
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	Proficient
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	Proficient
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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training. Teacher teams and staff have established a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

A system of accountability for high expectations has been established and supports exist that prepare students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- All staff is involved in one of six Professional Learning Communities and partakes in professional development sessions several times a week. During professional learning sessions, staff is trained on pedagogical efforts intended to improve both teacher practice and student achievement. For example, a recent professional learning session focused on answering the essential question, “How can modeling impact student performance and increase student engagement?” Staff shared specific strategies they have recently made in their modeling practices, watched a video and developed a list of highlights and supportive next steps. Follow up sessions included workshops that addressed other questions, such as, “How can teachers further refine their work around modeling?” “How can teachers increase small group instruction in their classroom?” and “How to best empower students to take ownership of their learning?”
- High expectations are embedded into the culture of the school. Students are encouraged to have S.W.A.G.G.E.R. (Students Who Achieve Good Grades Earn Respect), which is painted on a large mural in the lobby of the school and worn on shirts by many students. Additionally, attendance records for every month are posted for all classes and staff throughout the building on display boards since a core belief by staff and building administration is that students need to be in class to succeed academically. Parents shared their children now “run to get to school because they want to be here,” feel welcomed and “love writing.”
- Student work is put on display all throughout classrooms and hallways with clearly marked examples and high expectations identified. Display boards connect the assignment task rubric to various student work samples that reflect model examples using a string or ribbon for each indicator. For example, in addition to receiving feedback in the form of glows and grows so students understand their next steps to furthering their progress, Common Core Learning Standards are highlighted across content areas where students have performed at a level of mastery in alignment with the rubric.
- Posters displayed around the school regarding students’ awareness and intentions to go to college include written anecdotes by students of their goals to go to certain colleges and universities. Additionally, teachers discuss their college experiences with students and post information regarding their schooling on their classroom door. Several of these classroom door posters have sticky-notes from students explaining what college means to them, including; “your ticket to success,” “a learning center,” “what you want to do with your life,” and “a place where you go to get more education after high school.”

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points in to the curricula for students, including questioning, scaffolds, and discussions.

Impact

Instruction consists of uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and inconsistent demonstration of higher order thinking skills in students' work products and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The instructional focus throughout classes, according to staff and building administration, is embedded in the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Specifically, it is a shared belief that students learn best by student discussion through accountable talk. For example, in an English Language Arts (ELA) self-contained class, students were challenged to write self-portrait poems utilizing ideas from their "life map" and then share-out their products. During the share-out, one girl volunteered to tell her peer, "I felt your work had rhythm and was sweet and thorough." Another student shared she felt her classmate's poem included "the emotions outside you were in an angry mood, but inside I felt that you were really happy for your mom giving birth." In an English as a New Learner (ENL) class, students asked one another in small groups what they may be thinking and how they feel very anxious about the flight of Amelia Earhart. During discussion, several boys agreed and disagreed with their partners' interpretations of an image during a turn-talk-write and share. This type of high-level discussion and critical thinking regarding student work products and curricular resources was not consistently found throughout the majority of classes, although many attempts at discussion were made.
- Throughout classes, instruction utilized structures including many small groups and cooperative work. In a math class, students were asked to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from their peers by creating a choice question for analysis and calculation during the understanding of measures of central tendency. Partners worked to explain how the various approaches to find an average can be used to determine the best answer. In a science class, students determined watershed regions' impacts on factory toxins through a hands-on interactive laboratory experience. Although both opportunities provided students the opportunity to be engaged in their learning, the level of rigor required to complete the task did not support high-levels of critical thinking.
- Opportunities for students to better understand their content through multiple entry points varied across classes. Some classes offered stations for learners to have different experiences than their classmates, while others were provided choice topics for writing and calculating. However, most instructional approaches consisted of uniform teaching to meet the needs of all learners. Additionally, students across the classes were not always able to articulate their learning objective and next steps to demonstrate their thinking and participate in the lesson.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, integrate the instructional shifts, and make purposeful decisions. Additionally, curricular planning documents and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

Curricula promote college and career readiness for all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum documents reflect planning using adopted content from various resources including Teachers College *Reading and Writing Project*, *Engage NY*, *Accelerated Math*, and *Glencoe Science*, among others. Teachers worked collaboratively to refine their curriculum maps on an online curriculum mapping system. Purposeful decisions to embed the instructional shifts in the lesson plans have especially focused on ELA instructional shifts 3, 4, and 5; and math instructional shifts 1, 2, and 3. A review of several lesson plans highlights the Common Core Learning Standards and practices associated with each lesson. For example, a math lesson designed for students to be able to compare properties of functions includes stations where students will compare two different linear functions, build a model of pentagonal numbers and analyze the pattern, graph various equations, and develop a verbal description to support their claim. A lesson plan for a group of ENL students includes the Common Core Learning Standards and the English as a Second Language (ESL) Standards and performance indicators with the lesson.
- Academic vocabulary is a focus planned throughout all lessons and is an integrated part of curriculum documents and unit plans. For example, a science-planning document includes the connection of content related vocabulary such as watershed, runoff, slope, rural, and reservoirs as a part of the lesson to be included with student explanations. A poetry lesson in ELA requires to students to understand the definition of a simile and metaphor. A math lesson about making real world connections to statistics intends for students to understand the measures of central tendency using terms such as mean, median, mode and range.
- The inclusion of differentiated strategies is a component of some lesson plans, especially for ELLs and students with disabilities. For example, the provision of translated examples of similes and metaphors in Spanish was developed for students with the meaning identified. Other planning documents include the reference to small group intervention strategies, additional definitions and pictures being provided, the use of text resources, and teacher conferencing.
- Modeling student expectations was identified in most lesson planning documents and is an instructional focus according to the teachers and building leadership. Modeling is referenced to help reduce student misconceptions and increase student engagement and performance on class tasks and assignments. For example, showing draft examples and showcasing exemplars is an intended instructional focus across contents areas and grades.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. Additionally, common assessments to determine student progress toward goals are used by staff.

Impact

Actionable feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement and the results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Assessment data is collected for every student through benchmarks and shared with teachers including the previous ELA and math state assessment results. The percent of Level 1 students coming to the school has risen from 63% to 69% to 76% over the last three years respectively. Teachers use this data to inform how they structure their classes and how they choose tiered reading texts offered to their students. Students are made aware of their reading levels for book selection and show growth on their Lexile level in almost all classes throughout the current school year. For example, September to February benchmarks assessments show growth on average Grade Level Equivalency for the majority of classes, including grade 8 students moving from a 4.5 to a 5.8 during that time frame. Math grade equivalency results show similar growth throughout classes.
- Students receive actionable feedback from most of their teachers, including attachments in the form of sticky-notes or typed comments stapled to student work products. For example, in addition to a grade of 3.5/4 noted at the bottom of an assignment based on the attached rubric, the teacher told the student, "You conveyed ideas and information about a subject in a well-structured text. You made deliberate choices about how to order sections and about the sequence of information and ideas within sections." The teacher also identified next steps for the student that included, "Write an introduction in which you interest the readers and write a conclusion which restates the important ideas." This level of feedback and identifiable next steps was coherent across grades and subjects, including many rubrics being photocopied as small versions with each component rated individually.
- Teachers were observed and report conferencing with their students regularly to provide immediate adjusted instruction when necessary. Adjustments to instruction are determined with data collection and analysis through the use of checklists during instruction. Many teachers were assessing their students' understanding of concepts and redirected group work by asking probing questions. For example, in a science class, the teacher worked with a student who was struggling with graphing their data results; the teacher referred the student to a labeled exemplar graph posted on the wall and asked questions to elicit the student's understanding of the difference between the x- and y-axis.
- Teachers collect exit tickets in many classes to inform them of what students have learned or not learned from the lesson in order to guide future instruction. A review of several exit tickets from one math class included students explaining how linear and non-linear functions maintain a constant rate. The teacher stated she will use this information "as a form of formative assessment to help gage the understanding of the concept." Other exit tickets were collected throughout the instructional period and placed on conferencing sheets for specific students with written notes about the students' performance and skill work.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams also consistently analyze assessment data and student work.

Impact

Inquiry practices have strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers and typically result in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- As part of the Renewal School Comprehensive Education Plan, teachers have adopted the Four “A”s Text Protocol and “Data Wise” Improvement Process protocol for use in their inquiry meetings. During an observation of a grade 6 ELA team, teachers began the meeting by reviewing the objectives, which included building assessment literacy, examining data for noticings and wonderings, and identifying patterns and trends within the data. Reading tracking sheets were provided to all teachers who proposed several wonderings, including, “If we will see growth because they are a same-sex class?” “If we will see growth that was similar to the ELLs?” and “What caused the differences in *Fountas & Pinnell* levels?” Teachers shared that they were “all starting to feel more comfortable with this process” and “we don’t think we have ever focused so heavily on data like this and it is really good.”
- Teachers feel their inquiry practices have improved their teaching skills and instructional delivery in a variety of ways. For example, they acknowledge they are looking at data and seeing how they can strategically support their learners and implement the action plans to targeted groups of students. Specifically, the adjustments made to curricula and the embedding of Teachers College resources into their content from grade 6 through grade 8 has already made pacing and unit changes for the next calendar year come to fruition. Additionally, as a result of reviewing assessment results, teachers concluded students were not fully prepared for the poetry unit because they were still struggling with sensory words and other literary devices. They implemented immediate changes to the curriculum including adding additional units to focus on those topics and developing assignments over break to support students’ understanding.
- A review of prior inquiry and common planning time agendas and minutes highlighted the use of student work to identify student progress. For example, teachers discussed how their lessons in conjunction with the training from the Teachers College staff developer helped their students to have improved understanding of short responses, extended responses, and paired passages. Additionally, teachers agreed they will begin instruction with easier and more relatable text prior to moving to more challenging text. Lastly, teachers designed their instruction to allow for practice of analyzing rubrics to help improve students’ writing scores by knowing the expectations. This strategy is intended to prepare them for extended response questions with increased understanding of the associated 4-point rubric.