

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

George F. Bristow  
Elementary School 134

1330 BRISTOW STREET  
BRONX  
NY 10459

Principal: KENNETH THOMAS

Dates of review: April 4 - 5, 2012  
Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline Gonzalez

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

George F. Bristow is an elementary school with 680 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 45% Black, 52% Hispanic, and 3% White students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 90.7%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school has a safe and inclusive environment that is conducive to student learning and teachers' professional growth. (1.4)
  - o Parents, teachers, and students, all state that the school is safe and welcoming. Students who describe the principal as friendly and strict also overwhelmingly say teachers care about them and really want them to succeed, thus making students want to learn. Teachers commented that the environment is friendly and they feel respected by their colleagues, as evidenced by an "increasingly collaborative" environment and opportunities to visit each other's classrooms. The leadership ensures a variety of extra curricular activities for students, such as ballet, robotics, Cook Shop, African drumming and Sports in Arts, which provide enrichment opportunities and engage students in non-academic initiatives leading to increased attendance and reduced incident rates.
- The administration analyzes student performance by class and subgroups and provides the data to teachers to inform necessary instructional and curricular adjustments to support student learning. (2.1)
  - o Leadership's analysis of summative data identified student response to open ended questions in math as an area of weakness school-wide. Additionally, student performance in reading, especially in vocabulary, decoding, and fluency, are identified as areas for improvement. Consequently, specific subgroups are targeted for additional support, including English language learners, Black students, and those in the lowest third citywide. Periodic Assessment data is gathered by grade and class and distributed to teachers and teacher teams for their use in adjusting curriculum and planning as needed. School leaders also provide teachers with assessment results including Acuity and Fountas and Pinnell reading levels to allow for appropriate instructional groupings and the design of necessary supports and extensions.
- Teachers use data from summative and formative assessments to identify goals that enable students to work towards mastery of learning targets. (3.2)
  - o Teachers state that the greatest challenge is having more than 60% of students below reading proficiency and over 50% below mastery in math. Thus, summative data, along with the periodic assessments in math, running records in reading, and student work products are utilized to define goals for individual and groups of students. Teachers help students identify individual learning targets, which are kept in work folders and on desks so they readily access them as references. Students are also designated for academic intervention based on their needs, and for students who are demonstrating proficiency some self-paced assignments are made available, resulting in all students having opportunities to work towards attaining their goals.
- The teacher team structure is organized around grade level inquiry and school improvement planning resulting in increased collaboration and a focus on improving student achievement. (4.2)
  - o Teachers meet one to two times weekly on grade level teams and share their reflections on the implementation of collaboratively developed lesson plans and

assessments. They also review student work and periodic assessment data and information gathered informs needed adjustments to unit and lesson plans. The school improvement team, comprised of grade-level representatives, meets once a month and focuses on identifying school wide trends and patterns of need. These structures have increased collaboration amongst faculty, improved communication between early grade (pre-K-2) and upper grade (3-5) teachers, provide for the development of coherent curriculum maps, and the sharing of best practices, thus increasing the consistency of teachers' instructional planning to meet students' needs and support improved achievement.

- The school has trained faculty and programs that support students' social emotional learning and partnerships that provide opportunities for students to participate in activities, increasing their personal growth. (4.4)
  - o A non-mandated guidance counselor and several staff members who have been trained in Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies provide social emotional support for students throughout the day in class as well as in one-to one meetings with students who exhibit frustration or do not respond appropriately to classroom expectations. Faculty members have established a buddy system to allow struggling students to temporarily go to a different class as a change of venue without losing academic time, resulting in a reduction of incidents in classrooms this year. Students also have a wide array of programs provided by faculty and external partners that link dance, music, cooking, and Robotics to academic supports and extensions, which according to students "are lots of fun and make them want to come to school and do better." There is an overall positive attitude towards academic expectations.

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

- Develop greater alignment of the curriculum across content areas and grades to include the Common Core Learning Standards and tasks that are rigorous in order to accelerate student achievement. (1.1)
  - o The faculty participated in professional development during the month of January to unpack the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards with regard to alignment of curriculum and development of higher order learning tasks. The current literacy units of study are reflective of this alignment and include standards-based rubrics and student self-assessments. However, the school's work around alignment in math and other content areas is still in its developmental stages, thus opportunities for student engagement in higher order tasks in all subjects is not yet evident.
  - o Some units of study and related lessons facilitate higher-level discussions using the Socratic method and accountable talk structures. However, tasks inconsistently require students to reflect on their learning and in some lessons the learning objective is unclear. In one lesson, the reading aloud of large portions of the text detracted from the objective of helping students understand and identify figurative language. Thus, students' potential to develop competency in selected standards is hindered.
- Improve teacher pedagogy so that lessons provide multiple entry points for students with varied learning needs including access to content, participation in discussions to produce meaningful student work products. (1.2)
  - o The leadership emphasizes vocabulary development as an essential element necessary for students to grasp concepts and engage in learning. In some

- classrooms, teachers insist that students articulate their understanding by using academic language, by asking students to reflect on their learning with peers, or explaining their work to the class. However, as this practice is not yet embedded across all classrooms, students do not have ownership of discourse for explaining content area concepts.
- o Teachers, predominantly in math lessons, make strong attempts to differentiate learning by using varied tasks, scaffolding strategies for language development, and hands on activities such as using manipulatives to understand comparison of fractions with unlike denominators. However, in lessons rich with text and language structures that are unfamiliar to English language learners (ELL's), the support was varied or limited and did not provide opportunities for students to use the new language or practice pronunciation of new words. Thus, acquisition of required knowledge for relevant subgroups is hindered.
  - Ensure that the use of resources is aligned to stated school goals and supports increased student achievement for all students including students with disabilities and English language learners. (1.3)
    - o The leadership has funded a position for a math coach/Academic Intervention Service provider, and a reading teacher to support the work of teachers with the high percentage of students below mastery in reading and math. Additionally, there is an extended day schedule of 50 minutes three times a week for remedial support for struggling students. Despite this increased use of teacher time to support students, a large portion of the coaches' time is used for direct instruction of students and thus impedes them from working effectively with teachers to elevate pedagogical practice across the school to accelerate improved instruction and student learning.
  - Improve the school wide alignment of the use of assessment results to effectively inform adjustments to teacher practice for improved student learning. (2.2)
    - o Administrators provide teachers with summative data on student performance and progress in reading and math by grade and class. The use of the grade level data however, to identify strengths and needs across classes and make adjustments to instruction is inconsistent. At the classroom level, in some grades, there is inconsistent use of rubrics to assess student work products. Some teachers use a four-point scale with clear next steps, while others use grades or checkmarks with little feedback. Additionally, at the classroom level, some teachers strategically check for understanding by asking students to summarize with partners and present their learning to the larger group, while other teachers do not incorporate strategies to ensure that all students show comprehension of new concepts. Inconsistent assessment practices and the lack of alignment of some assessments to curriculum make it difficult for individual and teams of teachers to track progress and make necessary instructional modifications to support all learners.
  - Refine the teacher evaluation and feedback system to include next steps for professional growth and clear expectations to elevate practice across the school. (4.1)
    - o Teachers are aware that a research-based framework is used by administrators to assess instructional practice. However, they describe varied experiences in the type of feedback they receive, which is loosely connected to the framework. Informal and formal visits occur every two weeks and result in either written or oral feedback. Although the leadership states a focus on planning and

preparation as a competency area for feedback, written reports to teachers do not always address this as a priority. Some reports to teachers capture clear next steps for improvement in pacing and management of student learning while other feedback only provides evaluative summaries of the observed lesson. The inconsistent and limited direction for elevating practice hampers professional growth across the school.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: P.S. 134 George F. Bristow	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score		X		
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</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, 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, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?		X		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?		X		
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
<b>Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?		X		
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?		X		
<b>Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?		X		
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?		X		
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?		X		

**Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.**

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching 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 inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X	
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?		X		
1..4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	

**Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?		X		
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?		X		
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?		X		
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?		X		

**Quality Review Scoring Key**

<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>
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