

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**The Henry Bristow School**

**Elementary School K039**

**417 Sixth Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11215**

**Principal: Anita De Paz**

**Dates of review: March 4-5, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Anita Skop**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Henry Bristow School is an elementary school with 388 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 6% Black, 14% Hispanic, 71% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 95.4%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is well developed.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school leader and her staff have reflectively modified the curriculum, deepening instruction in all content areas, and ensuring that all students are engaged in rigorous tasks, well aligned to the Common Core. (1.1)
  - Committed to a high quality implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the instructional shifts, the school has adapted and expanded the Teachers College units of study, extending the writing rubrics and checklists to all content areas, so there is a consistent level of rigor and strong student ownership of requisite literacy skills, routinely embedded in all assignments school-wide. These interdisciplinary units of study, grounded in social studies, enable all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and special needs students to develop rich content knowledge reinforced by seamless instruction. For example, in a fourth grade class, students created a written research report, using the non-fiction writing checklist and rubric, and a connected presentation project based on self-selected topics from Colonial life. This same level of attention to student needs is seen in the school's selection of aligned mathematics instruction. In order to ensure that students develop a constructivist understanding of mathematical concepts, the school has selected TERC investigations and has augmented this protocol with the strategies inherent in Go Math in kindergarten through grade two. Additionally, small group support utilizing push-in instruction and individualized scaffolds such as pacing adjustments, manipulatives, bookmark prompts and visually supported reading materials, enable all students to develop rigorous habits and higher order skills. As a result, levels of rigor are consistent in all classes and student rubric assessed writing and unit assessed math skills have already decreased the achievement gap between general education and subgroup students school-wide.
- Strong instruction in all classes and across all grades consistently reflects the school's core beliefs, so that students are routinely engaged in scaffolded challenges that produce rich discussions and meaningful work products. (1.2)
  - Instruction school-wide is aligned to the belief that students learn best using a constructivist approach which promotes ownership of learning and challenges each child. This belief system is seen in the teaching practices in all classrooms and is well aligned to the Danielson Framework and the Common Core. Across all grades, students self-select and develop social studies aligned research projects. For example, in one fourth grade class a student had done a project on life in colonial America, creating an article of clothing and a report on clothing of the period to be shared during a share fair. These projects begin with a two part menu that enables the student to select both a topic of interest to research and develop into a written report as well as a creative means of presentation such as a three dimensional model, a painting or a demonstration. Students are then given individualized dates at which time key components of the research and project will be addressed during a teacher conference, and plot these out on individualized calendars. Students are then responsible for

completing the required components in time for their conferences, leading up to a final presentation to the class or grade. This results in student work products that are truly meaningful and student ownership of learning that is extraordinary at the elementary school level, reflective of highly effective instructional practices.

- Rich student discussion is promoted through strong questioning techniques. In a first grade classroom, students were challenged by the teacher to cite evidence from a text to prove that a character in the book was angry. One student responded “It says, ‘No its NOT,’ shouted Ruthy and she raced back to class.” Another commented that since the NOT was in capitals, the author showed that she was angry. Students in the class who needed scaffolded supports had personalized character feeling bookmarks with words like: horrified, speechless and terrified. Consequently, all students demonstrate higher order thinking and participate in rigorous discourse.
- The use of school resources is consistently aligned to well-crafted goals that ensure student learning needs are met through rigorous instruction and extensive enrichment, enabling students to create meaningful work. (1.3)
  - The school leader has thoughtfully analyzed school needs, as well as enhanced and revised school goals so that all resources support instructional goals and long range action plans. Because the school is small, under 400 students, and does not receive Title One funding, budgetary resources have been prioritized at a very granular level so that every non-essential expense is eliminated. However, these priorities reflect the school’s commitment to instructional excellence and student success. Small class size is a key focus with even the upper grades maintaining classes slightly under the class size maximum. Professional development and enrichment opportunities also have precedence so that the school’s affiliation with Teachers College and extensive consultancies that support the arts and the social emotional needs of students are continuously prioritized. Reflecting on the number of incidents occurring at lunch and the need for students to develop strong independent socialization skills, the principal introduced “Kids in the Game,” a structured recess program. An additional F status Academic Intervention Services (AIS) teacher and an extra day with the guidance counselor ensure each child is well supported in reaching personal and school goals. Parents are also seen as a resource and support the school in reaching its goals both financially and by parent led enrichment opportunities, such as career discussions and providing support to students during class lessons. This collaborative structure was clearly seen in a parent led garden initiative that linked edible plants to science experiments on plant growth and student inquiry into nutrition. As a result, the school has been consistently high performing and the instructional focus has led to meaningful student work in all content areas.
  - Teacher assignments and hiring practices are highly evaluative and consistently designed to meet the needs of students in alignment with school goals. The school uses a push-in Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) model so that students in both Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes receive individualized and small group support that is directly aligned to the classroom instruction. Response to Intervention protocols, extended day and additional AIS teacher supports also help

struggling students. Careful attention is paid to teacher assignments as exemplified by the movement of a strong fourth grade teacher to the fifth grade to further strengthening this pivotal grade. Principal hiring practices also focus on providing the strongest instructional options for students. Working with recommendations from colleague and student teachers from Bank Street College, the school conducts a rigorous interview process using teacher developed questions, a model lesson and/or a visit to the candidate's current site. Therefore, teachers who are hired have been carefully screened and have the same philosophical focus as the school, ensuring that pedagogy is of the highest caliber and teachers are well placed to help the school meet its goals. Further, reflective hiring practices and assignments have enabled teachers to work collaboratively that create protocols, such as the grade level assessment folders, that provide accountable evidence of impact on student success.

- Extensive formative and teacher designed assessments, well aligned to the curriculum, assess student progress towards data-defined goals, providing students and families with actionable feedback at frequent intervals. (2.2)
  - A cadre of common assessments, rubrics, and checklists, such as math unit assessments in TERC investigations and Go Math, and the Teachers College Writing Continuum rubric are used school-wide and are well aligned to the school's curricula, providing high quality data to teachers and students. In addition, a grammar usage and mechanics rubric augments task specific writing rubrics to ensure that students develop the language convention skills needed in alignment with Common Core expectations. Running records and teacher conference notes in all content areas, collected on an iPad App, also enable teachers to actively reflect on student progress on virtually a daily basis. Grades have been normed by grade to ensure coherence and consistency. Further, introduction to student rubrics prior to the writing work, followed by ongoing checks for understanding including student checklists, bookmarks, peer conferencing using rubrics, all enable students to identify areas of strength and need. This information is then made actionable to students and to parents through continuous and granular teacher conferencing and rubric annotation, and the use of assessment folders, which go home to parents with commentary for review after every assessment. This depth of understanding of next steps was evidenced consistently by student commentary as work was discussed during student meetings and classroom visits. Students are provided with individualized resource binders that enable them to work on their next steps in or out of class with consistency of focus. For example, one student commented that working on his goal of including greater text evidence in writing, had enabled him to become a better writer. As a result, students routinely work to improve individual mastery and parents have a very clear understanding of student needs.
- The principal and her staff use transparent, highly granular systems, to regularly evaluate and revise all curricular, instructional, organizational and cultural decisions in a timely manner, optimizing student growth. (5.1)
  - A wide range of protocols and practices are used school-wide to monitor and revise all decisions and ensure that all resources are effectively targeting school-wide goals. Observations are analyzed for trends and are

coupled with reflection on student work products from the lesson seen. Student work is collected and reviewed monthly. Teacher data binders are also examined and student progress evaluated. The richness of this work is exemplified not by the collection of information, but by the use of the information to adjust decisions, the openness of the discussion and the sharing of data with the entire school community. For example, though the school follows a strong Teachers College model, when data identified fluency and phonetic needs in early childhood, the decision was made to move to the more structured Foundations phonics program which though initially met with skepticism, soon showed greater student progress. It is this pragmatic, honest approach that has enabled the principal and the staff to work together with a common focus and dedication that is extraordinary. This is seen in the assessment of the culture of the school as well. Not satisfied with the Learning Environment Survey, the School Leadership Team (SLT) developed its own survey targeting school specific concerns at a deeper level, and identifying areas of concern such as the need for more structure at recess which led to the decision to implement "Kids in the Game." Teacher teams and the implementation of the Danielson Rubric decision are also regularly evaluated through the analysis of key data. Trends from Danielson defined observations are identified and professional development provided on a school-wide level. Protocols enable teams to reflect on their own work and the principal to monitor progress. Study groups use the Four "A" text protocol/ graphic organizer to help them to analyze research and findings. Meeting notes reflect agendas organized into three categories: "What (are our findings)? So what? Now what?" enabling the principal to easily access and evaluate the work of teams, though she attends most meetings as well. Consequently, the school leader and her entire school community reflectively identify and address needs in an extremely timely manner, ensuring that school-wide goals and student success are constantly supported.

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

- Refine targeted feedback with accountable next steps so that teachers consistently enhance instruction based on Danielson defined expectations. (4.1)
  - The school leader consistently provides teachers with targeted and high quality feedback from frequent cycles of formal and informal observations well aligned to the Danielson Framework. Student work, data and lesson plans are also assessed to ensure that feedback articulates clear expectations for next steps that are meaningful and well-defined. Further, the roll-out of the Framework has been well supported so that teachers have a clear understanding of the expectations of the Common Core as it is aligned to the instructional practices. Professional development, provided by the Teachers College coach, the Network and in-house teacher leaders is also well aligned to Danielson identified teacher needs. However, while classroom visits demonstrated that the vast majority of teachers had a clear understanding of expectations defined for them in their feedback, instruction in a very small number of classes indicated that feedback next steps had not yet been fully incorporated into instructional practices. For example, pacing in one third grade class left little time for student discourse even though this was a school wide focus evidenced in observational feedback. As a result, classroom rigor and the potential for student growth in alignment with CCLS expectations are hindered.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Henry Bristow School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score				X			
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
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?				X			
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?				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 supports 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 those expectations?				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 student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			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			
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>