



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

**Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning  
2013-2014**

# **Quality Review Report 2013-2014**

**The Blythebourne School**

**Elementary School 105**

**1031 59<sup>th</sup> Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11219**

**Principal: Johanna Castronovo**

**Dates of review: January 23 - 24 and 27, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Karina Costantino**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

The Blythebourne School is an elementary school with 1,761 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises .1% Black, 4% Hispanic, 3% White, and 93% Asian students. The student body includes 56% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 98.1%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is well developed.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school has a coherent rigorous curriculum that is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and integrates the instructional shifts across grades and content to engage all students in cognitive learning. (1.1)
  - School leaders and teachers have created in-depth units of study and performance tasks to increase students' critical thinking skills. For example, in literacy, fifth grade learning tasks engage students in reading fictional texts that requires them to think and interpret the author' message. Reading tasks are also linked to written assignments as students are expected to use text-based evidence, while using the lens of character, to develop literary analysis and substantiate their understanding. In a math learning tasks, review activities are created to refresh students' skills in operations with fractions and equivalence, in order to complete extension activities that require command of these basic skills to construct their own magic squares. In science, for example, samples of learning tasks focus an analysis of producers and consumers, and the relationship between them, thereby deepening students' content knowledge and thinking skills. In bilingual classes, the teacher interchanges Chinese and English to develop learning opportunities that reinforces academic vocabulary across content. Similarly, across content areas, all units of study require students to create their own meaning and use academic vocabulary in reading, writing, and speaking, thus developing academic language in the four modalities to meet the rigor of the CCLS. Furthermore, since the school is comprised primarily of English language learners, the school's curricula integrates scaffolds and learning activities to supplement content learning and second language acquisition, thereby addressing the academic needs of student subgroups. Given the time and supports for curricula access, English language learners make significant progress in second language acquisition as evidenced by the most recent New York State English as a Second Language Assessment (*NYSESLAT*) where 64.2% made significant progress and 18.4% achieving proficiency.
- Teacher pedagogy emanates from a consistent set of beliefs that is informed by The Danielson Framework and strategic curricula access to improve academic outcomes for all students. (1.2)
  - In each classroom observed, students engaged in learning activities that required them to create their own meaning and use what they learned to solve real world problems. These rigorous habits are visible in the academic tasks delivered in classrooms across grades for diverse learners. In addition, the Workshop Model allows students to take ownership and responsibility for their learning while the teacher's role is that of a facilitator. An example of this was observed when students used a class rubric to assess and identify their peers' next learning steps. Lessons and teaching artifacts represent deep content knowledge, understanding of students' linguistic differences, and use of other available resources, including technology laptops and Smart Boards, to engage all students in challenging learning. For example, in a second

grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, children were involved in a learning activity that required them to compare *Strega Nona* to *The Magic Porridge Pot*, and culminated in a writing assignment. Students used turn and talk activities to determine whether the problems in both stories were the same, hence demonstrating rich verbal ability. In addition, students used prompts to share what their partners said, stating whether they agreed, disagreed, and why. Furthermore, students received organizers and checklists to embark upon their writing, thus resulting in increased students' autonomy for working independently and able to identify their next learning steps.

- Students across classrooms produce meaningful work products and engage in discussions that reflect critical thinking, creativity, innovation, problem solving, and student ownership of their learning process. This is highly evident in student writing pieces that tackle real world problems and the school environment. An example of this was seen in a second grade classroom where, while the teacher was conferring with a group of children, students independently discussed and completed a writing task about the setting of a book they had just finished reading as a class. The purpose of their writing was to see if the change of setting affected the main character in any way. The school refers to this practice as "cognitive schema," where students use prior knowledge to decipher new information. Students worked with an age appropriate student rubric, and when finished they were directed to work with a partner for a peer assessment activity. As a result of various learning opportunities to promote self-reflection and active engagement, students have demonstrated increased levels of thinking and participation.
- School leadership makes strategic organizational decisions that support the school's goals and teachers' assignments to prepare all students for college and career readiness. (1.3)
  - Staff time is structured so that teachers' schedules allow opportunities for meeting time. In addition, teachers' professional responsibilities align with the schools instructional goals. For instance, meeting time is designed and programmed by the administration and includes the following: professional activity period, grade level teacher team, school instructional core team (The Inquiry Team), instructional lead, mentoring and mentee, GLOBE, Response to Intervention (RTI)/Academic Intervention (AIS), and special education and technology meetings. These meetings address the specific needs of students and particular subgroups to improve academic outcomes, and assist teachers in developing strategies and learning tasks to further develop students' thinking skills. An example of one strategy is the development of a Listening Center Exit Slip for the lower grades. This is a rubric that children use to identify three new words they learned, two critical observations about the book they chose to read, and one question to discuss with their group, thus developing students' independence for their learning while challenging their thinking.
  - The principal indicated that her budget enables her to hire additional personnel to provide further supports for teachers and students. To this end, Generation Ready consultants were hired to provide additional professional development opportunities to teachers on the

implementation and understanding of the CCLS. Since the school's population is made primarily of English language learners (ELLs), leadership has strategically hired 22 English as a second language (ESL) licensed teachers, and 23 bilingual licensed teachers to further ensure that English language learners receive a rigorous academic instructional program coupled with high support. Eleven of those teachers hold dual certifications in English as a second language (ESL) and a bilingual extension. English language learners received 45.1% in 75th growth percentile on the 2013 ELA.

- The school uses common assessments and analysis of student learning outcomes to strategically monitor students' academic progress resulting in increased students' awareness of their next learning steps. (2.2)
  - The school analyzes a range of data sets and assessments to determine students' interim academic progress. This includes, but is not limited to Fountas and Pinnell Benchmarks, New York City Performance Assessments, Design Your Own (DYO) K-2 Assessments, the New York State English as a Second Language Assessment Test (NYSESLAT), and teacher created formative assessment tasks. Teachers continually look at the data during teacher team meetings to make adjustments not only to the units of study, but also identifying effective instructional strategies to support students in developing content knowledge. In the teacher meeting, teachers were able to speak to various instructional and curricular adjustments and were able to explicitly cite the positive impact to student learning. An example of this is the decision to focus on language acquisition in the lower grades, moving to student self-reflection in grades 3, 4 and 5, once students have mastered the language. This has resulted in improved teaching practice as evidenced by improved student work products seen during teacher team meetings.
  - Checks for understanding are used in the form of teacher prompts such as "I agree" and "I would like to add on," to engage students in self-reflection and identify their next learning steps. This was evidenced in conversations during the student meeting, where they explained how they use their peer's responses during lessons to check on their own learning or to self-assess, and use rubrics to evaluate their classmate's work. Teachers record students' conversations and responses to gauge understanding of learning objectives, and use this data to strategically group students and provide individual students with next learning steps. As students are aware of the assessment criteria for all tasks, they are adept at using rubrics to self-assess and independently revise their work. In addition, across the school, students are able to articulate expectations and specific learning steps to increase their academic performance. For example, during my small group meeting with the students, they indicated what their biggest challenge was and how after looking at exemplars, they were able to identify their next steps, empowering them to take control of their learning. In addition, students are well aware of assessment criteria and participate in creating their own rubrics to assess and track their acquisition of content objectives. Consequently, across classrooms, students produce work and engage in rich discussion that reflect critical thinking, problem solving, and ownership for their learning as evidenced in their yearly class goals.

- School Leaders strategically use data from observations and the Danielson Framework to provide meaningful feedback to teachers and develop professional growth, thus leading to improved teaching practice. (4.1)
  - The school community has focused closely on the Danielson Framework for Teaching to assess, support and improve teacher practice, and address students' academic needs by engaging teachers in goal setting and action planning process. Teachers receive support through intensive professional development opportunities that are planned and provided by the principal, assistant principals, four school-based coaches, Generation Ready consultants, and instructional leads. Using the Danielson Framework for Teaching as a foundation for teaching and the Constructivist approach for engaging students in learning, the school's administration strategically cultivated a shared understanding for student centered instruction. Furthermore, the school leadership focuses on giving targeted feedback to ensure that, across all classrooms, teachers use strategies to further impact on teaching and learning including questioning and discussion techniques, hands on learning activities, collaborative group work, small group instruction and individual conferences with children aligned to the competencies of the Danielson Model. Through ongoing focused observations and follow up support, supervisors developed a cycle of continual improvement where feedback is specific, evidence based, actionable, and timely. The cabinet calibrated about what effective teaching looks like and has provided ample opportunities for teachers to observe best practices by creating lab sites, inter-visitations, literacy and math coaching to ensure the consistency of teacher development and practice. The collective growth of instructional practice is measured over time and is monitored to ensure alignment to the school's instructional goals. When talking to teacher teams, teachers expressed that they are more confident in their teaching as a result of transparency around the classroom observation process and feedback for improving instructional practice.

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

- Enhance the process of school level decisions and adjustments to enhance the coherence of policies and practices across the school with particular attention to culture and organizational resources. (5.1)
  - School leaders have an effective practice in place to regularly evaluate and adjust curricular practices within classrooms. The parent coordinator and guidance counselors work closely with families and have introduced many initiatives, such as a detailed form upon registration, to better understand the background of families. However there is currently no process to regularly and strategically evaluate this new initiative as having an impact on the school registration process. School teams meet regularly and in detail discuss strategies to impact the performance of their particular grade. However, school wide systems to monitor and measure the effectiveness of interventions designed by the teams and, implemented at the classroom level are not yet fully developed, thus limiting the ability to engage all stakeholders and particularly hindering growth of staff in relation to the CCLS.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Blythebourne School/ 20k105	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>				<b>X</b>			
<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?				<b>X</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>X</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>X</b>			
<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?				<b>X</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>X</b>			
<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?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</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>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
<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>