



**Department of  
Education**

*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report 2013-2014**

**The Ronald H. Brown Elementary School 155**

**27Q155**

**130-02 115<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
South Ozone Park  
NY 11420**

**Principal: Gregory Jacobs**

**Dates of review: January 27-28, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Mary Barton**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

P.S. 155 is an elementary school with 598 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 31% Black, 20% Hispanic, 2% White, 36% Asian, 6% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 3% other Pacific Islander, and 2% multi-racial students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 11% 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 94.8%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school uses data from common assessments to gauge student progress, provide feedback to students and make curricula and instructional adjustments to meet students' needs. (2.2)
  - Across all classrooms visited as well as on corridor bulletin boards, current student work focusing on various genres of writing, math problem solving and writing pieces on the principal's book of the month were displayed. All student work had rubrics and/or checklists and feedback around content and mechanics. Students across grades spoke to understanding the feedback given by their teacher and what their next steps were. Rubrics from ReadyGen, the English language arts curricula and GoMath, the mathematics curricula, have been modified to better meet student and teacher needs. Rubrics and checklists are written in student friendly language so that they are understandable to students. Teachers analyze student work during their team meetings identifying trends from the common unit assessments from Go Math and ReadyGen. With a school wide emphasis in place, the school looks at the work and data of students in the lowest third citywide and the lowest third students in each classroom. Teachers modify curricula and lessons in order to better meet students at their entry points. Teacher teams also have studied data from the Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) assessments administered last fall and have identified three traits that students, across a grade level, need the most improvement in. Teachers have taken this information and used it to modify curricula so that there is an additional focus in these areas. In administering a MOSL-like assessment mid-year to students in grades 3, 4 and 5, 76% of English language learners in these grades demonstrated progress compared to the fall assessment in three focus traits in English language arts. Students with disabilities showed a 92% increase in the same focus traits comparing fall to mid-year. With all of the assessments this school year, the administration published a school wide assessment calendar so that all staff are aware of the common assessments taking place. Data trends from the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment, which is administered three times yearly, are studied carefully and the results are used to adjust curricula and instruction as well. Through this work, there has been an increase of 69% of students with disabilities moving at least one level from the fall to the mid-year assessment in grades 3-5. As a result, teachers have made adjustments to curricula and instructional practices to meet the entry points of students and students can speak to their areas of strength as well as areas for improvement, thus owning their learning.
- The school has a supportive learning environment that conveys high expectations for teachers and families with clear feedback for next steps fostering an inclusive community of mutual accountability. (3.4)
  - In reviewing data from the New York City's Department of Education's school survey, communication with teachers was deemed an area of improvement for school administrators. Additionally, faculty members realized that changes in their practice needed to take place after analyzing the results of the New York City Department of Education

Progress Report for 2012-13. In addressing this concern, teachers received a “Guide for Success” binder from administrators at the start of the school year with information ranging from the rubric for the Danielson Framework for Teaching, the Common Core Learning Standards in English language arts and mathematics for their own grade as well as one grade above and below, and a faculty handbook with staff expectations as well as other pertinent documents. Teachers place subsequent memos and professional development materials into the binder and use the guide as a “one-stop” resource. Teachers spoke to being grateful to have received the resources that help them to fulfill their expectations and the fact that they are in one place to refer to again and again. One teacher stated, “By having these items at my fingertips, I feel much more organized and can do a better job”. Bulletin board walkthroughs were established to promote and encourage a culture for learning that showcases quality student work. A checklist was given to teachers at the start of the year. Supervisors regularly conduct walkthroughs and provide awards for each bulletin board fully reflective of the school’s expectations. Daily events and expectations are posted on a newly purchased monitor that is outside of the main office. With the schools participation in the Teacher Effectiveness pilot last school year, teachers had been already familiar with the Danielson framework. With that said, teachers are open to feedback from supervisors as well as to teachers visiting colleagues’ classrooms to add this learning to their professional repertoire. Additionally, teachers meet one on one with supervisors for monthly data talks. A protocol, given to teachers ahead of time, is used for the conversation. Teachers are expected to bring student work and data to each meeting. Data trends are discussed as well as each student’s progress. Support is put in place if a student needs Tier 1, 2 or 3 interventions. Students in the lowest 1/3 citywide in English language arts and mathematics or both areas are given a particular focus. Teachers also are provided with a monthly calendar to direct teacher team work and a protocol for looking at student work. Through the school’s vertical team, comprised of teachers representing all grade levels and administrators, teachers have a forum for sharing their thinking with colleagues and supervisors around curricula and instructional practices. Teachers spoke to having a clear set of expectations this school year which assists them in their work. As a result, there is increased teacher communication with administration and teachers and a culture of mutual accountability.

- The school views parents as essential partners in ensuring that students are on the path to college and career readiness. Expectations for parents are communicated through a parent handbook, distributed at the start of the school year, a “meet the teacher session” to outline curricula, the grading policy and class and grade events as well as monthly newsletters and calendars. An additional “H.O.T.” (Higher Order Thinking) newsletter is published periodically with updates around student learning, a school technology update and extracurricular activities so that parents can be kept current. The parent coordinator has held workshops around the Common Core and a well-received Go Math university took place so that parents could become more familiar with curricula and support their children at home. Other workshops are offered to support children socially and emotionally. Teachers are expected to be pro-active and meet with parents as soon as possible if students are faltering. Parents in grades 3, 4 and 5 are provided with workshops and information regarding the

middle school process. Third grade parents were included this year so that they can understand the process early and the importance of supporting their children. Excellent attendance for students is also an important expectation which is communicated consistently and shared by families. To that end, the school, in partnership with Jamaica Hospital, operates a medical clinic which is available for students to have their overall medical needs attended to. Parents reported that having the clinic available enables children to be treated quickly when they become ill enabling them return to school to learn. They appreciate having the services of the clinic available. Parents reported that the principal listens to their concerns. He speaks monthly at parent meetings to report on the school's progress and welcomes ideas from families around school improvement. As a result, parents are given the tools to help their child to be successful in schools.

- School leaders conduct observations and provide teachers with feedback derived from the Danielson Framework for Teaching and an analysis of student data resulting in improved instructional practices. (4.1)
  - The school served as a pilot school for the Teacher Effectiveness initiative during the 2012-13 school year. Through this work, the supervisors and teachers had an understanding of the framework and on-going internal and external support. All teachers conducted the self-evaluation on ARIS Learn before they met with a supervisor for their initial planning conference last fall. Based on these results, feedback from the prior school year and the school's instructional foci around monitoring student progress and enriching questioning and discussion practices, all teachers set two professional goals. These goals have been referenced in current school year observation reports as well as in the monthly data talks that focus on student work and progress. Teachers are given actionable feedback, directed to pertinent videos on ARIS Learn, and PD 360, purchased by the principal this school year, as a resource to help them improve in their practice. Mid-year conversations are taking place with teachers to review their Measure of Teacher Practice (MOTP) data and to reflect on their professional goals. Teachers who need support in particular competencies are able to visit colleagues' classrooms who have shown effective and highly effective practices in those areas. Additionally, teachers attend professional development opportunities based on their needs. The only new teacher in the school has a mentor teacher assigned to work with her. Through all of the systems that the supervisors have put in place, teachers spoke to feeling supported in their work. There has also been a change of culture in the school where teacher share practices and plan together. As a result, teachers have many opportunities for support in their development and have improved in their practices as viewed in observation reports.
- Teachers are engaged in vertical and grade level teams looking at student work and sharing best practices resulting in strengthened teacher pedagogy and improved student outcomes. (4.2)
  - All teachers are members of teacher teams structured by grade level. Grade levels teams are expected to follow a focus that comes from data trends. The focus for each meeting during the course of a month is shared through a calendar, published school wide, at the start of each

month. A 'looking at student work' protocol is used at each teacher team meeting with a follow up taking place at the start of each meeting to revisit the progress of the implemented practice discussed at the prior meeting. An agenda is set before the meeting ends in preparation for the next meeting. A team member completes a sheet delineated with areas around the focus, discussion points, questions asked, resources needed and implementation steps as well as a data dive for each meeting as a way of keeping minutes, with a copy forwarded to a supervisor. A fifth grade teacher team looked at student work and data from a recent math assessment of students in the lowest 1/3. Teachers looked at trends, which included transferring concepts learned into solving the word problems as well as understanding and using mathematics language effectively to solve and write their thinking, culling this information using low inference descriptions. Teachers shared practices that would help these students as well as all students and agreed to introduce a mathematics word of the week with the word used throughout the week in order for students to own it and the concept behind it to apply in problem solving. In having structured meetings with a focus, there was a 25% increase in performance across the grade on a recent math unit assessment. First grade teachers used the same protocol and analyzed data from a recently administered school developed assessment modeled on the Measure of Student Learning (MOSL) assessment in English language arts administered last fall. They looked at trends which included students' use of transition words in their writing as well as including pertinent details from the close reading of text that are connected to the topic of the composition. Teachers shared various graphic organizers that would help students. They agreed on using one across the grade which lists transition words that could be used by students for their topic sentence, detail sentences and their concluding sentence. Through this ongoing work, 76% of first graders met the standard on the recent MOSL school developed assessment. Teachers, who choose to, are a part of a school wide vertical team which meets monthly. Guiding questions distributed ahead of the meeting. The team looks at the implementation of the standards and the Go Math and ReadyGen curricula from a school wide perspective. They also share best practices from their respective grade teams. These practices are recorded, distributed and shared by teacher leaders with all teachers at each grade level during weekly double period planning meetings. This work results in teachers having the opportunity to analyze student work and to implement practices to help students make progress.

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

- Strengthen the work across all subject areas to ensure that learning experiences engage students consistently in higher order thinking skills to promote college and career readiness. (1.1)
  - The school has reflected on curricula and has looked at ways to further engage students, increase the rigor and meet students at their entry points. By adopting Ready Gen and Go Math as the English language arts and mathematics program, respectively, the school has ensured that the curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers have modified curricula to meet the needs of the lowest 1/3 citywide and school wide by using the Understanding by Design (UbD)

model with assessment expectations driving the planning. There is a focus around the close reading of text with students writing informative and persuasive pieces of writing. In reviewing student tasks, however, it appears that in the upper grades, students are not always writing persuasively using at least two or more texts to gain their information from. Additionally, while the school is focusing on the lowest 1/3 citywide and in the school, it is apparent that there are not always extensions provided for students who perform at higher levels. This was observed through examining units of study and student work. Through this omission, all students are not experiencing the full rigor and expectation of the standards. As a result, not all students, specifically lowest and highest achieving students have the tools necessary to fully meet the standards.

- Deepen the use of teaching strategies linked to the Danielson Framework for Teaching that enable staff to develop questioning and discussion practices that allow for extension of learning. (1.2)
  - As a way to promote student engagement in learning and to meet students at their entry points, the school has made a major investment in technology and software. The school has purchased smart boards for every classroom, as well as iPad and laptop computers to provide new and exciting tools to reach students. In analyzing the school's Progress Report from 2012-13, the school saw that math was a particular area for improvement and saw that they needed to engage students more and plan with their needs in mind. To that end, the school implemented a school wide flip classroom model for all students school wide where students study a math tutorial and can problem solve on line daily based on the concepts they learn for the next day. This is used as a preventive strategy to lessen and/or eliminate the Response to Intervention (RTI) lessons for that day. Teachers use data from these exercises to plan instructional groups daily with a particular focus on students in the lowest 1/3, students with disabilities and English language learners. Through analyzing formative and summative assessment data, in most classrooms viewed, it was evident that teachers are planning with supports for varying groups of students at their entry points. Lesson planning reflects these considerations. Additionally, in order to strengthen student discussion in whole class or in small groups, a collaborative decision was made to purchase an audio sound system for each classroom. Students were utilizing the system during classroom visits enabling their thinking to be heard clearly by teachers and classmates. In being able to hear each other, students and teachers respond more quickly to each other without having to continually ask students to repeat themselves resulting in a more fluid discussion. This system has also allowed more students, who were reticent to participate in discussions in the past, to feel more confident to contribute to discussions, particularly students with disabilities and English language learners. With that said, teachers, in some classrooms, still dominate and lead the discussion. As a result, some students are not given ample opportunities to extend their thinking and take full ownership of their learning.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Ronald H. Brown	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>