



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

George F. Bristow

Elementary 134

**1330 Bristow Street
Bronx
NY 10459**

Principal: Kenneth Thomas

**Date of review: January 23, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Matthew Angell**

The School Context

George F. Bristow is an elementary school with 670 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 47% Black, 50% Hispanic, 2% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.5%.

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 Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Focus	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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data, and student work for students they share. Distributed leadership structures are embedded within the school.

Impact

Teaching practice has improved as well as mastery of goals for students they share. Effective teacher leadership plays an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams use a structured cycle of inquiry to deeply analyze assessment results, norm grading of student work, and revise curricula and practice. A 5th grade team was observed using a student work protocol to review a recent pre-assessment for an upcoming interdisciplinary science and English language arts unit. Teachers organized the data from their classrooms by student performance on each rubric trait and brought in samples across different subgroups and levels of performance for the team to review as well as a summary of their own noticings. The team used a protocol to adjust the upcoming unit.
- Teacher teams on each grade have a team leader who meets regularly with school leaders to discuss school progress towards school goals. Teachers in all grades reported that this structure allows teachers to have a voice in all key decisions that affect their grade. This structure has been used to review curriculum choices made for each grade to establish coherence. Teacher teams reviewed materials and submitted their feedback to school leadership.
- The professional development committee consists of grade leaders who consistently revise and differentiate the professional development plan to meet teachers' needs. School leaders request input from all teachers on what professional opportunities they believe they need to improve and combine that information with data they gather from the teacher observation schedule.
- During multiple times per year and over the summer, teacher team leaders meet to discuss larger school-wide issues such as goal setting and larger curriculum improvements. This structure has allowed the school to identify gaps in the standards vertically across their curriculum. For instance, grade 2 teachers reported that writing expectations for kindergarten and first grade were revised because 2nd grade students were having difficulty writing full paragraphs due to a gap in the Common Core writing standards in 1st grade.
- Correlated with the work of the teacher teams is an increase in closing the achievement gap. Students performing at Level 3 or 4 in English language arts and mathematics increased by 4% between 2013 and 2014. Similarly, multiple subgroups, including students with disabilities showed above average progress on State exams in 2014.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments and rubrics aligned with the school's curricula. The school uses common assessment data to determine student progress on the team level to adjust curricula.

Impact

Although teachers and teacher teams review and analyze student data from curricula and common assessments, they do not yet create a clear portrait of student mastery and progress across grades. In addition, though teachers do provide actionable feedback to students aligned to school rubrics, it is not consistently meaningful.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams analyze student progress from common unit assessments, including progress for groups such as English language learners and students with disabilities, and make adjustments to their units. Teachers then provide feedback to school leaders at monthly grade leader meetings and at a voluntary end of year curricula review, but the curricula data is not otherwise captured at a school wide level limiting a big picture view of school progress towards goals.
- School leaders spoke about improving student portfolios as an important next step for teachers as connected to a school-wide goal to improve assessment. A review of student work portfolios showed multiple pieces of rubric-based student work with actionable teacher comments to students on next steps in each student's folder. Many teachers included student goal sheets within portfolios and some included a portfolio overview sheet that tracks progress over time. The practice of students and teachers looking at their work over time so that they can notice progress towards mastery is not yet embedded across all classrooms.
- Students reported their teachers gave them rubrics to help them complete their essays and projects, and received verbal and written feedback to support them in their next steps. Most students could identify a skill or rubric trait they were trying to improve. However, some responses were general such as "I need to elaborate" and as a result some students were not always aware of how to get the next level on the rubric.
- School leaders and grade leaders look at MOSL data in mathematics and English language arts as well as Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) leveling multiple times per year. MOSL data is analyzed at the beginning and the end of the year and F&P data is tracked three times per year. Although this data is discussed among the staff it does not yet connect with the curricula data that teachers and teacher teams are collecting to create a clear, school-wide, coherent analysis of the curricula.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across grades and content, the school's curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

All students have access to Common Core aligned curricula and tasks that consistently require them to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills and rigorous habits across grades and subjects, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has adapted units from Envision in mathematics, and Ready Gen and Superkids in English language arts to meet the needs of their learners and include more opportunities for higher order thinking. For example, unit plans and lesson plans identify key vocabulary support, scaffolded discussion questions, manipulatives, and differentiated materials to support all learners.
- Curriculum maps are revised to integrate Engage NY materials and focus on academic vocabulary and text-based evidence throughout their units after teachers reviewed baseline data and looked at student work.
- Teachers expanded their English language arts curriculum to include more opportunities for students to read appropriately Lexile leveled non-fiction text and include more writing opportunities for students. They have focused on science and social studies non-fiction texts.
- Teachers have revised units based on assessment data from students to offer scaffolds to diverse student population. For instance, it was noticed in grade 4 last year that students had difficulty on multi-step word problems. Teachers collaborated and created problem solving scaffolds such as close reading strategies, graphic organizers, and academic vocabulary supports, incorporated them into their units, to help students plan, solve, and check for understanding in mathematics.
- A review of teacher team agendas and minutes revealed that teacher teams meet regularly during structured meetings to review student work products and adjust the units of study. 3rd grade reported adjusting units of study to include quick write strategies and graphical and vocabulary supports for English language learners.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and school-wide beliefs are aligned to the Danielson Framework and student participation demonstrates high levels of thinking.

Impact

Across classrooms, student work products and discussion reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, lessons are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and informed by the Danielson Framework. In a grade 4 English language Arts class students engaged in whole-group and small-group discussion around the use of dialogue in the text *Pecos Bill*. Students cited textual evidence to support their comments and challenged each other's thinking. One student disagreed with the idea that Pecos Bill was brave and was able to use the text to support his claim. From there, students extended the conversation and attempted to solve the disagreement using the text.
- Students work products during lessons and in work folders allowed students to demonstrate higher order thinking. For example, in a grade 5 science classroom students were engaged in a multi-lesson investigation into the properties of food. Prior to the investigation, students researched and wrote essays on macronutrients in food. During the lesson, students investigated the starch contents of different foods. Students used appropriate academic vocabulary to describe procedures and findings to each other. The unit plan included a culminating project that combines learning from the research and investigations students conducted.
- School leaders and teachers discussed the need to increase focus on academic vocabulary and across classrooms, teachers provided supports throughout their lessons on strategic vocabulary. For instance, in a grade 3 classroom students reviewed key science vocabulary terms prior to transitioning to small-group reading. The teacher modeled using context clues to identify the meaning of new words. Students completed a teacher created, scaffolded pre-worksheet for students to practice identifying word meanings with a partner. Students then discussed and used those strategies in their small group.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

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

Impact

School leaders have a clear system of accountability for teachers aligned with expectations. Students receive ongoing, detailed feedback with supports to prepare them for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate high expectations through the observation cycle, professional development sessions, staff handbook, and weekly memos to staff. The professional development team reviews teacher-created needs assessments, and data from observation cycle to provide differentiated professional development opportunities related to school-wide goals.
- Teachers meet regularly with students to discuss their progress and their goals. Students were able to identify their reading levels and their rubric goals in multiple subjects. They also knew which small, leveled groups they were assigned to, why they were in them, and what they had to do to move to another group.
- During monthly grade leader meetings, school leaders keep teacher teams focused on school-wide goals and receive feedback from teachers on team assessment data, student progress, and team professional development needs. A review of teacher team minutes and agendas showed that team leaders share outcomes of grade leader meetings with their team and identify teacher concerns that should be addressed at the next grade leader meeting. One outcome of this process has been professional development sessions on using student portfolios to monitor student progress.
- Teachers and school leaders review student progress together during the year and inform parents and students of grade expectations to ensure students know what is expected to move to the next grade during parent workshops, and parent-teacher conferences