



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**The Kensington School
Public School 179**

**202 Avenue C
Brooklyn
NY 11218**

Principal: Valerie Joseph

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Reviewer: Jan Lomas

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Kensington School, Public School 179, serves 962 students between pre-kindergarten and grade 5. It is a Title 1 eligible school.

The school has a multicultural student population which includes 33% Asian/other students and 31% Hispanic students. In addition, 29% of students are White while the remaining 7% are Black. The percentage of students who have recently arrived in the country, 18.1%, is higher than that for similar and other City schools.

The school has 420 students who are English language learners which is a much higher proportion than typically found in similar and City schools. There are 66 special education students, a number that is about the same as other schools.

Historically, attendance has been broadly the same as similar and City schools however the rate is now rising.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is well-respected and has set the tone which is enabling the ongoing development of a collaborative culture, focused upon achievement for all.
- Valuable steps forward have been made in collecting and using data effectively across the school team.
- The curriculum is being developed well to enrich and support learning.
- The hardworking staff are working well together to support the development of new initiatives and priorities for development.
- Relationships throughout the school, adult to adult and adult to child, are positive and students appreciate the efforts of their principal and teachers in striving to meet their needs.
- Strategies to involve parents in the work of the school are proving effective.
- The principal is well-supported by her extended cabinet.
- Through the maintenance of a clear focus, standards of attendance and punctuality have incrementally improved.
- Classrooms are well organized and communal areas are used well to display and celebrate student work.
- The school has worked hard to develop and maintain a calmer, more orderly and safe environment, especially at busy times of the day.

What the school needs to improve

- Build on the valuable steps forward already made with the use of data tools and the analysis of all data, to ensure that clear identification and definition of priority areas for development are enabled to meet the needs of the school.
- Through effective professional development and support, deepen teachers' understanding of differentiation by task and further extend their range of instructional strategies in order to best meet the needs of all students.
- Strengthen curriculum mapping to demonstrate links across the curriculum and to incorporate all content areas and assessment priorities.
- Refine strategic planning to support clearly focused monitoring and evaluation of progress towards goals.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school overall.

The Kensington School, Public School 179, is proficient overall, although there are a number of well-developed features. The new principal was appointed after being assistant principal at the school for a short time. She has been successful in strengthening the collaborative culture of the school and is enabling the development of a clear focus upon achievement, underpinned by the effective use of data to drive planning, goal-setting and the monitoring of progress. Positive steps forward have been made in a number of areas. However, more time will be needed to build and consolidate these and to see the full impact of strategies and initiatives in terms of student progress and performance.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal has a clear grasp of the use of data to underpin professional judgment and the drive towards school improvement. She has created a data management team and this has encouraged all staff to recognize and give value to the full range of soft and hard data used across the school. All of this means that the use of data has become a more collaborative, regular, more rigorous and so effective process overall.

The school collects and uses a range of data and so has a clear overview of the performance and progress of students, classes and grades. Sources of data include formal, and interim tests, such as the early childhood literacy assessment, the Grow Network and New York State English as a second language achievement test for English language learners. The data team reviews the outcomes from the various assessments and ensures that messages are disseminated to all staff. The instructional team is now gathering student work samples, analyzing these and feeding back salient teaching points to staff. Teachers keep detailed running records, conference notes, student portfolios and ongoing assessments, and the data produced is used well to inform planning.

The school looks closely at data to understand the performance of ethnic groups. As a result, it has already put in place strategies to improve the performance of one its largest ethnic groups. Progress will now be tracked to monitor their impact. The performance of special education students and English language learners is monitored through routine procedures and through ongoing assessment by support and specialist staff. The school has only just started to track the comparative performance of some groups, for example all ethnic groups, class by class and grade by grade. It keeps a careful eye on the progress of groups of students of particular interest to its context. For example, there are a number of students who have extended breaks from school. While the school works hard to discourage such lack of attendance, it also ensures that such students are offered intervention services to assist their progress on their return.

The principal has identified a group of schools whose contexts and student populations have similarities with her own and has begun to compare achievement with these schools. She is now ensuring that clear graphical representations are used so that patterns and trends in comparative subject achievement can be more clearly seen. In addition, 'Monitoring by Results' has now been introduced in order to be able to track progress in reading more closely. This has already enabled comparison by grade group and has revealed data about trends in performance as students move through the school. The school is now ready to address these issues. The school is continuing to refine its data tools and use of data to hone its understanding of key issues for improvement.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The Comprehensive Educational Plan is now written collaboratively by staff and will be shared with the senior leadership team to ensure that teachers, administrators and parents are all involved in strategic planning. The structure of teams and meetings allows for consideration of assessment outcomes in a number of different ways and underpins the developing use of data to focus improvement strategies and planning.

Teachers use data at classroom level to enable them to group students for instruction and plan for the next steps of their learning. Ongoing assessments and observations enable them to understand what students know and can do, although there is some variability in their confidence and comfort with such record keeping at this stage. Teachers conference with students to help them understand what they need to do next to improve. They create rubrics for tasks, alongside students, which enable them to develop their self-evaluation skills further. Teacher recommendations and data from a range of sources are used well to identify students who are most in need of support. Subsequent academic intervention services and extended programs are used to address students' specific needs and careful records are kept to log students' experience.

The school, under the leadership of the new principal, has recently reinstated the parent teacher association and the senior leadership team. Opportunities for parents to find out about the work of the school are being strengthened. An example of this is the curriculum week which enabled the school to clarify each grade's curriculum program for the coming year. Good attendance at this event demonstrates the response of parents to the renewed drive to involve parents. Parents appreciate the responsive approach of the staff and one was 'commented' that the new principal 'knows how to share with parents'. The improvements to date augur well for further opportunities to convey the school's high expectations to parents.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The curriculum was mapped just before the current school year, and is being amended as needed, as the year progresses. Maps are aligned with mandated requirements and cover

English language arts, social studies and science. The planning shows 'strategy of the month' to highlight key teaching points and also includes the required writing samples for inclusion in portfolios. The school plans to add relevant assessments and resources to each section. While teachers were involved in their development, the curriculum maps do not explicitly show links between subjects. The curriculum is enriched well by opportunities to study art, physical education, computers, music and global studies. These are also not, as yet, mapped alongside other subjects. Students' book-making results in carefully produced and attractive work linked to the curriculum themes.

Teachers are accountable for using data to plan appropriate instruction in order to align with student needs. Differentiation of instruction and additional support is provided for identified students through academic intervention services or through the extended day programs. Teachers group students in class according to their next learning steps and conference with them to discuss their work in key areas of literacy. The principal recognizes the importance of additional professional development to deepen teachers' understanding of differentiation by task. She is aware of the value of extending the range of instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students in classes, particularly the many who are English language learners. Budgetary resources have already been allocated to provide for the enhancement of materials for this group. The principal has used the budget well to retain a teacher and create another second grade class to reduce class sizes. This is an example of sound decision-making to support school priorities.

The school has worked hard to ensure calm and orderly behavior and maintain a safe environment, especially at busy times of the day. Lunch breaks have been reduced from two to one, thus minimizing disruption and demonstrating good use of scheduling. Students express their enjoyment of aspects of the curriculum and generally attend well in their classes. One student said that this is 'a friendly school,' and they express their appreciation of the help they receive from their teachers.

Data shows that attendance has been steadily improving over the past two years due to effective and consistent use of a range of strategies. The school's target (94%) is prominently displayed and the current attendance figure stands at 93.5%.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is well-developed.

Teachers are hired through a comprehensive process that involves an interview, a demonstration lesson and questioning that finds out teachers' commitment and their skills of using assessment and data to drive instruction. Therefore, teachers are appointed who can support the school's development and priorities.

Training opportunities are provided through the use of external providers, who tailor programs to the needs of the school as well as through regional courses and workshops. In addition, literacy and mathematics coaches provide support and guidance for teachers and during collaborative meetings such as grade and faculty conferences, and common preparation sessions enable teachers to share ideas. Study groups give suitable opportunities for professional reflection and discussion about data and student work. However, the principal recognizes more time is needed for teachers to talk with academic intervention staff. Classroom inter-visitation, to share good practice, is encouraged and includes time before and after the event for teachers to discuss learning. Decisions about

professional development emanate from school and individual priorities identified through data analysis and classroom observations. Staff are also surveyed about their needs and teachers know that the administration is open to their views, recognizing that professionals should have the opportunity to take ownership of their own development. In their turn, staff have worked hard together to support developments and new initiatives.

Formal classroom observation is carried out, by the principal, as mandated, and informal visits and 'walkthroughs', which often focus upon key areas of current development, occur frequently. Good use is made of these visits to enable the administration to share what is going well in the classrooms and to consider strategies to address any areas for development at its daily cabinet meetings. This means that the principal knows teachers, and their strengths and areas for development very well. Meetings take place before and after observations with written feedback to give direction on how to improve instruction. Teachers appreciate the 'compliments' memos, received from the administration, which recognize good practice seen and so find the observation process both motivational and supportive.

The principal is well respected by all and, under her leadership, there has been valuable growth in the establishment of a collaborative team spirit across the school. There is a very clear and developing focus upon using data to define what specifically needs to improve in order to raise achievement. Classrooms are well organized to support learning and attractive displays celebrate students' work. The school runs smoothly on a day to day basis because everyone is kept well informed.

The school routinely uses partnerships with community based organizations and institutions to support its goals. An example of this was the visit of members of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra which caused much excitement and furthered students' interest in their music studies.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The Comprehensive Educational Plan is a detailed document which contains measurable goals rooted in data. The use of the plan as a strategic tool is proficient overall because it does not always show who will lead and keep each goal on track, nor include a timeline of events and check-ups towards success.

The school is developing its use of comparative data to enable a clear view of progress over time for students, groups and classes and for the 'big picture' of school performance. More time will be needed to be able to see the full impact of strategies and initiatives being put in place. Nevertheless, emerging data is already proving useful in identifying information about student performance which is driving further deliberation and planning. Revision of plans takes place in response to ongoing evaluation and, when appropriate, leads to the realignment of initiatives or additional resourcing. For example, data was analyzed which revealed the need to supplement staffing to further support students who were identified as 'at risk'.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Kensington School (PS 179)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X	
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	