



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Kappa

**3630 3 Avenue
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Sheri Warren

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Reviewer: John Collings

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

KAPPA (Knowledge and Power Preparatory Academy) is a grade five through eight Middle School. It attracts students from a wide area in the Bronx many of whom commute by public transportation and car. Parents choose to transfer their children here from elementary school at grade five rather than the usual grade six. There are approximately 250 students in the school with a rising population and an expectation that it will peak when it has four classes per grade. Originally modeled after the KIPP (Knowledge is Power Preparatory Program), KAPPA began in 2000 as a program within CIS 219. In 2005, KAPPA became an officially recognized and autonomous school under the current principal. It's motto is 'Education is our passport to the future'.

99.6% of students are in a general education less than 0.5% are special education students and approximately 4% English language learners. Approximately 0.5% are American Indian, 6%, Asian and Pacific Islanders, 54% Hispanic, 39% Black and less than 0.5% white. Attendance is high at approximately 95%. The teaching day is approximately two hours longer than most schools, and runs from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Overall students attain high standards and perform well.
- Attendance is high and significantly better than the city average.
- In the majority of grades students make good progress.
- Expectations of students' behavior and academic performance are high.
- There is a very positive climate for learning in the school and students behave very well.
- Good instruction in the school engages and involves students.
- Students are challenged, inspired and enthusiastic about learning.
- Students are polite well-rounded, articulate and take pride in learning and belonging to the school.
- And there is a mutual respect not only between the fellow students but between the students and teachers.
- The school is well led by the principal who is respected by teachers, students and parents and has the capacity to ensure the school continues to grow.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop the use of data, already in the school, to more clearly define the progress of different groups of students of interest to the school.
- Ensure higher attaining students are appropriately challenged.
- Ensure lesson plans identify a range of expectations for groups of varying ability within a class.
- Review goals to have a clearer means of evaluating what goals have been met.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Central to the climate of the school is the desire to develop a love of learning with high academic expectations. The high proportion of students entering prestigious high schools demonstrates this. Students are extremely well behaved and work very hard. They are inspired by the good instruction and want to achieve well. They are a delight to talk to and articulate their views very well. Expectations of students, staff and parents are also very high. The curriculum and consequent instruction is sufficiently flexible to be sure the vast majority of students are appropriately challenged.

The school is aware that it can improve instruction by using data even more effectively to ensure that the lessons are planned to have a range of expectations to meet the needs of different groups of students, particularly for example, higher attaining students. The school has a range of goals, which largely center around academic success, however, these are not universally shared with staff and students and the means by which goals are evaluated are not always sufficiently objective.

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 school collects a significant amount of data in order that it can modify the curriculum and day-to-day instruction to best meet the needs of students. It reviews this data systematically particularly at student level through the 'Kappa Cash' reporting system, quarterly examinations, and teacher assessments every two weeks. This ensures that any students falling behind or finding difficulties are identified and supported promptly. This is reflected in high-grade scores particularly in grades 5 to 7. Although the school records this information in an assessment manager system, the school is not currently reviewing frequently enough how well the different groups of students do compared to each other systematically. The school is aware that it could use the data it already has more effectively to, for example, compare the progress of students in different classrooms, grades, ethnic groups or other categories of interest. However, the school has identified from the analysis of data that it needs to challenge the highest attaining students further and is currently planning to introduce a talented and gifted program to address this issue. The school compares how well its students perform against other Middle schools in the District and its own past performance. These comparisons demonstrate the school is improving year-on-year.

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 school uses data effectively to set goals, for example, to continually increase student performance by implementing project based work and enquiry based learning in science and social studies, and emphasizing writing across all content based subjects. It has put into place a concise overview so staff are focused on the main goals for the school. However, the evaluation of the impact of these initiatives on different groups of students, classrooms or subjects is not yet sufficiently clear.

The school pays significant attention to improving the performance and progress of students in the greatest need of improvement. The systems in place to identify whether individual students are falling behind or having difficulties are rigorous. Students report that they feel well supported and able to approach staff with academic or social problems.

There are very high expectations in the school. The ‘Kappa Cash’ system informs parents how their children are doing every two weeks. Parents are invited at any time to approach the school with concerns as a result of the good reporting in place and as soon as the school has concerns parents are contacted. Students are very clear about the areas in which they need to improve, although these are not always expressed as formal goals. These high expectations result in a school that has a very strong climate for learning where all are striving toward academic success and to implement its motto, ‘Education is our passport to the future’. There is a real and effective partnership in the school between staff, students and parents to raise student performance but the criteria against which the success is to be evaluated requires some clarification.

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 with some well developed features.

The school implements the mandated curriculum well. It does this through flexible curriculum planning to meet the needs of the students in its care. There is good ongoing assessment to ensure that the curriculum is appropriately implemented and is revised to meet the ongoing needs of the students in different grades and classes. For example, if a particular area of the curriculum is well understood, less time is allocated to it. If however students are having difficulties, more time is spent until there is sufficient understanding to move forward.

Teachers are very professional and hold themselves accountable for improving student outcomes. They are also held accountable through formal and informal classroom observations. They differentiate work appropriately through modification of the curriculum but are less adept at planning lessons that have been clearly based on their prior attainment and which, contain a range of expectations for different groups of students in their classes. The school directs its budget well to address identified needs. For example, significant teacher support was needed to move from homogenous to heterogeneous grouping. As a result of this in-service training and the implementation of heterogeneous grouping, student performance has risen. However, the school is aware

that continued support is necessary to develop greater differentiation within the classes. The school has also committed a significant amount of its budget to science equipment to further its goal of developing students' skills in scientific enquiry but this has had insufficient time to impact on student performance.

Scheduling decisions are flexible and are adjusted to meet the needs of students. The most radical change has been to extend the school day so that it runs from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm. The extended part of the day is used to include additional areas to which the school is committed, for example, the emphasis on reading, particularly novels and current events, thinking skills, and problem-solving. Students love these programs. They are fully engaged throughout the extended day. They enjoy being challenged, the variety that is on offer, want to succeed and in the larger part to see learning as fun. Consequently student attendance is high.

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 proficient with some well developed features.

Two years ago the school was restructured. This enabled the current principal to choose her own staff. Teachers have high expectations of behavior and academic success and use on going data on a daily and weekly basis to adjust their instruction. At whole school level the systematic analysis of data to compare, for example, groups of students is less well developed. However, using available data, the school has identified that an area for improvement is to encourage students in critical thinking. As a result of this there has been significant professional development to support teachers in implementing this initiative through workshops, seminars and university courses. With the school's commitment to developing scientific enquiry, it is committed to supporting teachers in developing their own understanding of scientific investigation and there is a significant amount of peer support and collaboration with teachers working well together to achieve the school's aims.

The principal frequently observes classes. Staff are used to her coming in and out of their classes and talking to students and feedback from these observations is seen as positive, and part of their own professional development. It is not uncommon for teachers to observe a model lesson and to work in each other's classrooms and the school also offers opportunities for teachers to visit other schools. Taken together these are regarded as very good opportunities by staff to improve their pedagogic practice. Curriculum and lesson plans are reviewed and evaluations shared, but this is not yet endemic across the school but is increasingly the case.

The principal is respected by all. There have been significant improvements and development since she took over as principal of the reconstructed school in 2005. The school runs very smoothly with staff enjoying teaching and students learning in an orderly and intellectually stimulating environment. Youth services and support services are well used to support academic programs.

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 school's plans and goals are identified in the comprehensive education plan and are expressed in terms of increasing academic performance. However, these are not always sufficiently clear as to the terms by which the success towards these goals will be evaluated. Data is used to identify performance of individual students across grades and classrooms but it is not so well used to identify whether students or students within classes and grades make similar or better progress than would be expected based on their past performance. The principal reviews the progress toward the school's goals on a regular basis, but these are not systematically shared across all staff. However, the six monthly review of goals is used well to revise programs including those in the extended day as well as those for high attaining students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Kappa	∅	✓	+
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	