



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

John F Kennedy High School

High School 475

**99 Terrace View Avenue
Bronx
NY 10463**

Principal: Anthony Rotunno

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Reviewers: John Collings and John Hudson

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The school is the largest of five schools within the Kennedy Campus. It has 2675 students enrolled, of whom 1618 are in general education, 530 are special education students and 527 are English language learners. This school receives Title I funding for 80% of its students. Approximately 67% of students are Hispanic, 27% are Black, 3% are White and 3% come from Asian and other backgrounds. Attendance is improving but is currently 80%, which is a little lower than the averages for similar schools and all City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Very clear leadership, vision and direction from the principal have resulted in a renaissance of the school over the past few years.
- Strong but flexible leadership through the principal and cabinet responds to the changing needs of the school, recognizing and prioritizing issues for development.
- There is a strong commitment to improving instruction to engage and enthuse students in learning through a caring and supportive climate.
- Significant developments in the generation and use of data mean that it is being used effectively to inform instruction.
- There is a strong sense of community in the school, which is committed to student learning and adaptable to change and challenge.
- School performance is steadily improving.
- The creation of small learning communities has resulted in the school focusing on placing student need at the center of the school's philosophy.
- The small learning communities are making a significant contribution to students' commitment to learning.
- There is a wide range of extra-academic support for students within, and in addition to, the regular school day.
- The very strong links between academic requirements and participation in the very successful sports programs has improved student engagement in learning, resulting in academic success.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop the use of data to identify expectations for students more precisely, and their progress towards goals.
- Use existing data more effectively to track the year to year progress of students.
- Develop further the initiative to include more differentiation of instruction.
- Improve the ongoing review of goals to identify more accurately whether goals are being met or are in need of revision.
- Make sure subject identity is maintained to ensure academic rigor and to enable the tracking of student progress within subjects.

- Continue the rigorous efforts already in place to improve attendance.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

This school has undergone a renaissance since the appointment of the current principal. It is now a safe place where students are well cared for and supported. They are able to learn effectively with a strong sense of community. This has been achieved through the strong leadership of the principal and cabinet, through greater use of data to inform instruction, and the creation of small learning communities to enable closer tracking of student performance and need. This has resulted in steadily improving student achievement. However, the school is aware that it can use its existing data more effectively to identify more accurately the progress of students and use this information to further inform instruction, the curriculum and resources. Differentiation in lessons to accommodate the range of student ability and proficiency in English is limited. However, this is a focus for school development to ensure lessons more frequently include a range of expectations matched to students' prior achievement.

The school has used its strong reputation in sport to attract students but ensures that academic success is a prerequisite to them taking part in its broad range of sporting opportunities. The school has clear goals but the means by which progress towards these goals is not well articulated or shared across the school sufficiently. In spite of the school's best efforts, student attendance is an issue for the school.

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 is using data effectively to gain a very clear view of the performance of each student, class and grade level and this close monitoring has led directly to the improving performance of the school. It does particularly well when identifying and supporting those in need of the most support, for example, English language learners and special needs students. It is less effective, however, in using this data to identify whether students are making average, better or worse progress than expected based on their prior achievement.

While effectively monitoring many different groups of students the school is aware that greater use of the data could be used to align the curriculum to student needs. The school uses data effectively to compare itself with its past performance, which shows a steadily improving picture. It also uses other available data to compare itself with other schools across grades and subjects but less effectively across ethnic and other grouping within the school.

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 identify many goals, which are clearly identified in the Comprehensive Education Plan with objectively measurable objectives. Goals are derived through good collaboration within the cabinet and discussion with staff. The school is less clear about how it measures progress towards these goals through regular review and modification.

The school has used data effectively to identify that English language learners are facing challenges not only in English but also, for example, in social studies, science and problem solving. This is being addressed through the inclusion of more classes where English, with appropriate support, is used as the first language, particularly to support writing. This approach is beginning to have a positive impact on the performance of these students.

The school is very effective in supporting those students in greatest need of improvement. It has created additional classes within and outside the school day to support students. The school has also used its enviable record in team sports to encourage many students to remain academically engaged by insisting on minimum academic success before being allowed to take part in school teams.

The school’s high expectations, conveyed to students, parents and caregivers is having a positive impact overall. Regular planned meetings and prompt contact with parents when students are not performing as expected is also raising expectations.

The cabinet has high expectations for student performance, progress and attendance. As a result there has been a steady improvement in all three. Academic goals are also rising with students taking Regents examinations at an earlier stage and with the planned introduction of advanced placement courses for the next academic year.

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 school implements the mandated curriculum effectively. This is achieved through a significant investment in resources to create small and additional classes that best meet the needs of students by ensuring that teaching starts at the students’ instructional level. The school has also made a significant investment in after-school and Saturday programs. The Young Adult Burrow Central (YABC) courses have been particularly successful and have maintained the academic involvement of many 17+ year old students while enabling them to pass Regent examinations, thus having a significant impact on overall school performance.

Teachers are held accountable for instruction through the informal and formal observations, not only by the principal, but also the assistant principals through the small learning communities. Instruction is largely differentiated through the provision of

additional support such as 'push-ins', after school and Saturday programs, and staff giving their time to help students. Differentiation of instruction to align it with each student's prior achievements is less well developed.

The school has used budgeting and scheduling effectively to reorganize its overall structure into small learning communities. This structure was introduced this year and early indications suggest that it is effective in spite of some staff perceiving some loss of academic identity. This is being addressed through the initiative to review of the small learning communities. The introduction of small learning communities has resulted in staff knowing their students very well and the data within each community being more manageable. Prompt analysis of this data ensures student involvement and academic success. For example, smaller and additional classes and after-school support are directed to meet specific needs, thus maintaining student engagement. The school is aware, however, that to increase student engagement further the good use of differentiated expectations in some lessons could be replicated across the school.

The students feel safe in the school. The introduction of the small learning communities has put students at the center of the school's philosophy. Students trust their staff with both academic and personal issues about which they are concerned. There is a very high level of respect for all staff, particularly the principal. The improved self-respect among students in the school is having a positive effect on their performance.

Student attendance is currently at approximately 80%. This is lower than the City average and improving attendance is a very high priority for the school. The school is very active in this area with personnel in each small learning community charged with contacting parents to follow up any unexplained absences.

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.

The school has effective procedures for selecting staff. Staff hired since the appointment of the current principal have been subject to increasingly rigorous procedures. The principal and cabinet have high expectations which are explored with candidates through interview, demonstration lessons, and a commitment to using data to reflect on the effectiveness of past instruction and to inform future planning.

The school's commitment to creating small learning communities and more differentiated teaching has been as a direct result of data analysis which showed that student learning is not sufficiently focused on supporting individual students. Both these initiatives have been the main focus of professional development and, as a result are beginning, to impact positively on student performance. However, both initiatives are in the early stages of development.

The principal, assistant principals and coaches frequently carry out informal observations of classroom teaching. From these observations, the school has identified that improvement is needed in teachers' ability to include a range of expectations in lessons for students of differing achievement levels within their classes.

The introduction of the small learning communities and common planning time has enabled staff to work closely as teams. This has enabled closer scrutiny of individual student performance and revision of plans to allow more opportunities, where appropriate, for concepts learned in one subject to be consolidated and developed in others. There are increasing opportunities for inter-visitation, not only within subjects but also between different subjects, thus increasing teachers' repertoire of instructional techniques. This is having some impact on increasing student engagement. The significant use of photography, video and music in classrooms has also had a significant impact on maintaining the academic involvement of many pupils who would otherwise be less likely to attend school.

The principal is highly respected by all. He has managed the renaissance of the school very effectively. The school is now safe, runs smoothly and there are clear procedures for communication, particularly with parents who value the school's supportive climate.

The school makes very effective use of youth development and support services. As cited above it has a strong reputation in sports, winning many prestigious championships in baseball, football, volleyball and other games and sports. The commitment of coaches and other staff to run the extensive range of after school clubs, classes and support services has had a significant impact on maintaining the academic involvement and success of many students.

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 has goals that are clearly identified in the Comprehensive Education Plan with objectively measurable targets. Although the progress towards yearly goals is monitored, the development of any interim goals and checks on progress towards them are made less explicit in the Plan.

The school is frequently updating its data on students through the small learning communities, which has proved instrumental in improving the means by which student performance is monitored. The systems are not yet sufficiently robust however to identify systematically whether students are making their expected progress based on their prior achievement.

The school revises plans when they are shown to be less than effective. For example, the reading consortium approach was changed when it was found many students were below grade level in English. This resulted in intervention to improve students' English language skills through increased teaching of English.

Overall the school reviews its plans and their effectiveness and the information gained is used effectively to modify its goals. The absence of explicit interim goals means the school is not able to evaluate its progress towards them frequently enough to ensure interventions are put in place to meet the needs of students as effectively as possible.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: John F Kennedy High School (HS 475)	∅	✓	+
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	