



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Kissena School

Elementary School 201

**65-11 155 Street
Queens
NY 11367**

Principal: Brett Gallini

Dates of review: April 17 – 18, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Diane T. Kay

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Kissena School is an elementary school with 387 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 6. The school population comprises 41% Black, 34% Hispanic, 6% White, and 19% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 90.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 79% eligibility.

The school was restructured in June 2007 and re-opened as a pre-kindergarten through grade 5 school with a newly appointed principal.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The new principal's exceptional leadership and high expectations for student learning and behavior have positively impacted the school's culture.
- The principal and his instructional cabinet are highly visible in classrooms and provide frequent, personalized support to staff.
- The highly motivated teaching staff assesses the performance of individual students regularly in order to determine progress and learning needs.
- The school has well-developed systems and structures for collecting and analyzing a wide range of data.
- Goals are transparent and clearly communicated to staff, parents and students.
- The broad and varied curriculum, including the arts, provides high levels of engagement and interest for student learning.
- Respect between staff and students is clearly evident and results in a safe, cooperative environment.
- Strategic decisions about budgeting, staffing and scheduling have significantly improved the school's learning environment.
- Professional development is proactively aligned to the needs of the students as identified by the data.
- Parents feel welcome in the school and highly praise the rigor of the curriculum and caring environment in which their children learn.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop the professional learning community by implementing a formal program of peer inter-visitations to build on the expertise of teachers.
- Improve upon the existing good practice to further develop teachers' skills in differentiating goals for grades, classrooms and all subject areas.
- Gather and analyze data that is specific to the needs of sub groups such as gender and ethnicity in order to align instruction to their specific needs.
- Extend the use of interim assessments to more rigorously and effectively monitor progress towards goals and revise practice to improve outcomes.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

This is a warm and inviting neighborhood school. The new principal very quickly gathered and analyzed the multitude of data available to him in order to establish school-wide goals for the year. He leads with energy and enthusiasm, and the staff echo his commitment to the social, emotional and academic growth of the students. The school is intent upon taking its collaborative community of learners to higher levels of achievement and has taken proactive steps in that direction.

Since the last Quality Review, the school has embraced a variety of new sources of data, such as DIBELS, Acuity and the school's progress report, and uses them to drive decisions and assess progress towards goals. Teachers have restructured their lessons to include very specific learning targets and objective outcomes. The school tone is significantly improved due to a number of very strategic administrative changes made this year, and opportunities for professional development have grown.

Data-driven instruction is a growing practice in the school. English language learners and special education students receive effective differentiated instruction. However, the school is only beginning to address the achievement of other subgroups of the school, specifically gender, ethnicity and high-achieving students. The staff is working to transfer its effective math strategies to English language arts and other subject areas. The school recognizes a need to continue to improve strategic instructional decisions and outcomes for each student, class, grade and subject. Towards that end, an inquiry team, which focuses on reading comprehension, now meets regularly and is working to model the action research cycle.

Parents are invited to be active participants in their children's education and the life of the school. They attend regular workshops that are held in the school's new Parent Center. They are kept informed of their children's goals and progress through the school's "open door" policy and frequent communication with staff. Students are enthusiastic about the instruction and support they receive which helps them attain their academic goals.

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 the student's progress over time.

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

The school has made good progress in the area of data collection and analysis. A full-time data specialist provides the staff with a wide range of electronic and manual data, as well as ongoing training in its use and analysis. The school's innovative "Tracking Wall" provides highly visible comparisons among grades, classes and subgroups; this leads to healthy questioning of accepted practices and targeted professional development. Comparisons of data and visits to similar schools have also had a productive effect on collective thinking.

The school is particularly successful in aligning data to math instruction and there is a clear trend of increasing performance in that subject. In order to address its less impressive trend in English language arts performance, the school has been very proactive in training staff in the use of two new assessment tools, the DIBELS and Acuity predictive and interim assessments. This has resulted in better understanding of students' individual English language arts strengths and needs. All teachers maintain organized binders and portfolios across subject areas that include results from a wide range of formative and summative assessments. Interventions determined by analysis of these records are also recorded in the binders.

The school is effective in gathering data in order to address the needs of special education students and English language learners. The school has strengthened the alignment of practice between classroom teachers and the support staff of English language learners. As a result, there have been improvements in student engagement and progress in English language arts for English language learners. The school recognizes the need to build on the analysis of data for other subgroups in the school such as gender, ethnicity and higher achieving students in order to address specific learning needs and track progress of those populations.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

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

Excellent use has been made of data from the new progress report and learning environment survey to set school-wide priorities for this academic year. Goals and high expectations for improving student behavior and English language arts achievement are known to all stakeholders and have been instrumental in promoting student learning and personal growth. The staff is highly collaborative and refers to itself as "family." Teachers and coaches meet regularly in weekly common planning periods and grade meetings to set common learning targets and plan lessons together. A new English language arts curriculum was introduced this year, and grade, class and individual goals are now clearer and more explicitly stated and understood by staff and students alike.

The data specialist prepares extensive reports for teachers of grades 3 through 5, following the most recent Acuity interim assessment of English language arts. The reports, referred to as a “roadmap for teachers” clearly break down results for each class and sort them into areas of strength, challenge and critical need for individual students. There has been much progress, but the school does not yet break down and make transparent specific individualized goals for all areas of particular interest or focus such as higher achieving students, and ethnic groups.

Parents feel very welcome at the school and are pleased with the changes that have been made this year. Through workshops offered by the school and a newly developed progress report, parents state that they have more knowledge and are better equipped to give their children academic support. Both students and their parents know and can verbalize individual goals and next steps for students. In some classrooms, goals are taped to desks as constant reminders for students.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The curriculum addresses all core subjects, as well as arts instruction and physical education for all students. Because of its work with the school’s large and challenging special education population, the staff has honed its ability to provide students with engaging, hands-on experiences. Goal setting and differentiated instruction are built into the curriculum and allow for differences in the rate and mastery of learning. The concept of flexible student grouping for targeted instruction is embedded in the school’s culture and is quite evident in classrooms. The principal and assistant principal are very visible and visit classrooms daily in order to ensure that school goals are being addressed. Parents and staff credit this administration’s high visibility with a marked improvement in the tone of the school.

The school’s academic goals are supported by strategic administrative decisions. For example, the schedule was reprogrammed to allow more time on task for English language arts instruction. This has resulted in a measurable increase in students’ reading and writing stamina this year. The school recognizes the value of interactive technology for literacy and content-area instruction and is anxious to build capacity in this area.

Comparative data indicated a need to address the student attendance. There are now structures for working with parents, and regularly provided incentives, called “Blue Bucks”, for individuals, classes and grades, in order to encourage students to come to school every day. Students report that they enjoy school and they use the word, “love” to describe their relationships with staff. As a result, the school’s attendance rate is on the rise.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

The principal and instructional cabinet provide excellent leadership and support for new and experienced teachers through the formal observation process and a very effective informal infrastructure. Their learning walks and daily visits to classrooms give them a clear understanding of the teachers' general and individual needs. Each visit is followed with informal written feedback that members of staff describe as helpful and fair. There is a strong culture of collaboration that is well supported by a variety of professional development structures, including demonstration lessons, after school workshops and faculty and grade conferences. New teachers enjoy close relationships with mentor teachers, as well as the personal support of the principal who holds regular new-teacher meetings. The school has begun to develop systems and structures for teachers to observe and evaluate each other's lessons, but these practices are not yet a routine part of the reflective learning approach.

All members of the school community report an improvement in school tone and student behavior this year. The principal responded to data provided about school-wide disciplinary incidents with significant scheduling and staffing changes via "Project Calm Lunch." A new hall-pass system is strictly enforced and professional development has been provided to enable teachers to better accommodate learning-style differences. The school offers social services support and counseling to students when required. Current data suggests a sharp comparative decline in the number of disciplinary incidents this year, as a result of the school's proactive response.

The school has formed partnerships with outside organizations that have had an impact on their students' academic and personal growth. Students recently won a bronze medal for a dance performance through their association with The American Ballroom Dance Company. A Texas-based organization, Applebaum, delivered professional development on Election Day entitled "One Hundred Seventy Five Ways to Reach Kids", as part of the school's plan to improve student behavior.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

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

The principal's strong leadership provides the staff with a very clear vision for the school's future direction and development. Long-term goals are set by standards for grade-level performance, and the cabinet and staff constantly monitor and record student progress, through regular formal and informal assessments of learning. In a similar fashion, evidence from learning walks and formal and informal observations enables the principal and cabinet to gauge the impact of professional development on the quality of instruction and the growth of teachers' expertise in targeted areas of practice.

The school has grown very adept at using periodic assessments to measure the effect of their plans and interventions on individual students, classes and grades. Instructional adjustments are made when data indicates that a mid-course revision is required. For example, data posted on the school's Tracking Wall suggested that students remained stagnant as pre-emergent readers for unreasonable periods of time. A close look at reasons revealed that teachers were misreading signs of readiness in low-level books. Professional development ensued which resulted in improved student performance. Teachers, similarly, readjust their instruction in response to the multitude of data they gather about student learning on a regular basis. The school does not extend current collaborative practices to include a deeper analysis of student outcomes. Established practices that measure progress along a continuum and drive next-stage goal setting and instructional decisions are not yet consistent across the school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Kissena School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?			X		
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped