



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Robert F. Kennedy Community High School

High School 670

**75-49 Parsons Boulevard
Queens
NY 11366**

Principal: Ira Pernick

Dates of review: October 3 – 4, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Cheryl Baker

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Robert F. Kennedy Community High School is a high school with 628 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 14% Black, 32% Hispanic, 31% White, and 19% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 89%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school's population increased by approximately 150 students from 2006-07. Previously, the facility was shared with the Robert F. Kennedy Middle School. When this school relocated, space became available for additional students at the high school. Most new students are in grade 9, some are in grade 10.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of the progress of individual students, classes, grades, and the school's progress as compared to its neighbors.
- The school's personalized and supportive culture effectively promotes the understanding of its students beyond statistical indicators of need or success.
- High expectations for students' academic achievement encourage students to do well.
- Graduation requirements that include community service activities effectively engage students in contributing to the life of the neighborhood.
- The school's professional development program effectively supports teachers in implementing new practices.
- Peer observation and collegial collaborative feedback on instruction have extended teachers understanding of their professional practice.
- The mentor program, through planned activities and structured coaching, provides effective support for teachers new to the profession.
- Students, teachers and administrators exhibit warm, respectful and trusting relationships.
- The school is orderly and well run, creating a calm, scholarly learning environment.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop training, management systems and structures to support teachers further in the use of school data.
- Capitalize on the school's collaborative culture in bringing greater specificity to plans for improving teaching and learning that include measurable goals, targets and timelines.
- Provide teachers with training in techniques for differentiating instruction based on their understanding of student's individual learning needs.
- Utilize periodic and diagnostic assessment data to inform decisions, measure progress and revise plans for individual students, groups of students and other aspects of the school identified for improvement.

Part 3: Main findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Since the last Quality review the school has made significant progress in instituting strategies for sharing good practice, as seen in its professional development activities and restructured schedule. Progress towards other goals has been more variable.

The school has a good grasp of its sources of information and is diligent in understanding each student well. The school looks forward to new data and periodic assessment results becoming available that will supplement the school's already good understanding of student progress. This reflective, self-evaluative school uses its small size and collaborative culture to support an organic approach to planning and goal setting. This approach has served the school sufficiently thus far. The curricular and extracurricular programs are broad and engaging. The culture of the school is respectful and focused on learning. Well-planned professional development activities are effectively improving instruction across the school community. There are good supports for teachers as they enter the profession and develop their expertise. The school benefits from very well informed and focused leadership and provides good support for teachers as they enter the profession.

School leaders have formed an inquiry team that is poised to incorporate data from periodic assessments into their understanding of their subject group.

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.

School leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of the progress of individual students, classes, grades and the school's progress as compared to similar high schools in its region. This has resulted in year on year success in meeting State achievement targets for academic achievement and graduation rates. Administrators utilize scholarship reports, regent's results, eighth grade test scores, attendance and other data, updated routinely, to monitor progress. Recently, the addition of an on-line grade book has broadened the capacity of teachers, students and parents to monitor achievement at the classroom level. This year teachers received the grade 8 math and English scores of incoming freshmen that has provided a sharper initial understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. The school also receives student scores from the Preliminary Scholastic Achievement Tests administered to all students in tenth and eleventh grades. Teachers

have received introductory training in the application of these informative resources and have also begun to utilize the on-line grade book to monitor progress more efficiently.

The progress of special education students and English language learners is monitored through the mandated programs, assessments and re-evaluations germane to their particular needs. The school's guidance counselor for instructional support services provides personalized expertise to these students and they show good progress in their time at the school. Many graduate on time and move on to higher education settings.

The school's culture is overtly inclusive. Students of all abilities and backgrounds receive, overall, the same college preparatory curriculum. The schools' ethnic groups perform well in comparison with one another. The school's analysis of performance has revealed that girls sometimes tend to perform better than boys do, and counselors have created a group to begin to address this disparity.

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

The Comprehensive Education Plan is developed collaboratively. It accurately reflects areas for improvement and sets targets for annual increases in student achievement in all content areas but lacks clear steps, measures of gain and timelines. School administrators successfully carried out planning for professional development and the addition of over one hundred new students. However, evidence of action plans, including measurable goals and timeframes, is lacking. The school depends on informal structures and interpersonal relationships among professional colleagues to guide its movement forward, to good effect. A positive exception is the mentoring plan, developed along City guidelines. This identifies specific personnel, actions, and dates for supporting the induction of new teachers.

Planning relating to students, classrooms, grade levels and subjects is informed, largely, by teachers' assessments of learning through a variety of mechanisms designed to check for understanding. Success in Regents examinations drives much of the planning and focus of instruction. The school's high expectation for academic achievement is effective in encouraging students to have ambitious goals for their future. Students' progress towards meeting graduation requirements is effectively monitored and informs planning, support and interventions for those experiencing difficulties.

Personnel are quick to identify areas of need, explore solutions and apply remedies, such as addressing unsatisfactory performance of students in collaborative team teaching settings. This is now an area of investigation for the Inquiry Team. The guidance team, teachers and administration have been successful in identifying those students in most need of improvement. They collaborate with parents to identify modifications and interventions appropriate to each individual case. The school is effective in promoting its mission to instill high expectations for academic achievement, community service, cooperative learning and the effective use of instructional technology. It accomplishes this through written documents describing the school, its website, monthly mailings to each home and through the principal's personal communication with students, parents, teachers and the community at large.

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 school’s core curriculum is directed towards rigorous State Regent’s examinations. All teachers utilize tests, quizzes, projects and other checks for student understanding in the normal course of instruction. Some departments, such as English, have developed common rubrics for judging students’ written work that are helping students to know their targets. The school provides students with good curriculum options in the arts, foreign language and other areas that broaden and deepen their exposure to a variety of disciplines. Extra curricular activities, clubs and athletics further widen students’ horizons. Community service requirements, school trips and challenging civics competitions also extend learning opportunities. Students and teachers demonstrate respectful relationships and students feel very much at home with their teachers, guidance counselors and the school’s administrators. Students like to come to school and attendance averages are far above that of City high schools. Teachers and school administrators monitor attendance well and practices are effective in promoting good school attendance.

Administrators are vigilant in their oversight of the delivery of curriculum. They have communicated expectations for inclusive instruction, effective use of instructional technology and opportunities for cooperative learning. Teachers vary with respect to their skills in these approaches. They are held accountable for their students’ progress and hold themselves accountable as well. Teachers are working toward use of diagnostic data to understand individual student’s needs and to refine the differentiation of their instruction accordingly. Some differentiation is evident in grouping for instruction and the provision of different activities within the lesson.

Administrators are adept at using data to plan for expenditures, adjust the schedule and hire staff. For instance, the addition of over one hundred students drove decisions related to materials acquisitions, the identification of eight new teachers, and the refinement of course offerings. Data suggesting that teachers needed more time to collaborate led to the revision to accommodate common planning time within the regular weekly schedule. This has enabled discussions about student achievement and improvements to instruction to take place.

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.

Recently the school has structured its professional development program and activities to include bi-weekly instruction in teaching methods encompassed in the Elements of Effective Instruction. These are then reinforced by peer observations and feedback on instruction. This practice involves all members of the instructional and support community and has increased the focus on and understanding of, high quality instruction. Additional collaborative planning time further supports this initiative. Administrators observe instruction formally or informally almost daily. The collective results of these observations and information from data sources such as the scholarship report, inform administrators’ professional development planning. This is increasingly differentiated, based on teacher’s individual needs. Teachers who demonstrate interests in other initiatives, such as the

action research undertaken by the Inquiry Team, are encouraged to take part as a form of administrative professional development. The school has also structured its mentor program to support the successful induction of teachers new to the profession. Experienced teachers are paired with new teachers and undertake a series of activities and observations of teaching, which are monitored and evaluated regularly. This has provided good guidance to new teachers and supported experienced staff in further developing their own instruction.

The school is a calm and orderly learning environment in which expectations for behavior are well understood and individuals take responsibility for conducting themselves in a scholarly manner. Students and their families are very well supported in their academic and personal development through the school's guidance department and students learn valuable lessons in civic responsibility through the community service program. Partnerships with several colleges, scholarly organizations and performance groups further extend the personal and academic growth of students.

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 proficient.

The Comprehensive Education Plan lacks sufficient detail and currency to effectively drive and support the attainment of the school goals. However, the school's relatively small size and collaborative culture supports its informal conversational approach to evaluating its progress and that of its students. For example, guidance personnel, administrators and the parent coordinator meet regularly to review attendance and discipline data to evaluate and revise goals set for students struggling to succeed. Administrators routinely track scholarship data and regents' results to ensure students are on track to graduate.

Teachers' professional growth is monitored through observations of instruction, each building on success in implementing previous recommendations. Teacher's progress towards their self determined annual goals are reviewed midyear by assistant principals. Teachers monitor the progress of students in key areas, such as special education or English language learners, through assessments and scheduled re-evaluations of their individual instructional plans. Teachers do not yet routinely use the results of periodic assessments and other measures of progress to adjust teaching or revise plans immediately.

The principal is an acknowledged force in the school and is successful in communicating the school's vision and mission through speeches, written and electronic communication and community outreach. For example, his leadership is evident in the well-organized and carefully thought out evolution of the school from a shared middle and high school campus to that of an independent high school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Robert F. Kennedy Community High 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 demanding, 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?				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?				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 make 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