



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Kappa III

**Middle School 316
2055 Mapes Avenue
Bronx
NY 10460**

Principal: Elisa Alvarez

Dates of review: April 4 - 5, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Paul Cosway

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Kappa III is a middle school, formed almost three years ago, with 251 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 43% Black, 52% Hispanic, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 41% of the students enrolled and girls account for 59%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 92.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 35% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Although the school is recently formed, it already collects a very good range of data to track students' progress
- The school is setting goals that reflect its high aspirations for the academic success and personal development of all of its students.
- There is a very good environment for learning and good discipline, so that students are motivated to get to college and want to learn.
- Staff know and care for their students very well, constantly seeking ways to help them to improve their work.
- Teachers work well in teams, collaborating well to share and improve their instructional practice.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students ensure that students grow in confidence and maturity.
- Professional development systems are effective and school leaders monitor classroom performance well to improve the effectiveness of instruction
- The principal is effective and highly respected, and with her assistant principal expresses a clear and fully shared vision for the school.
- Clear, consistent systems ensure the school is orderly and runs smoothly and there are good, productive partnerships with outside agencies.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend teachers' skills in differentiating instruction to ensure that instruction meets the needs of all students, especially high achievers.
- Set specific goals for students based on their prior achievement with interim targets to monitor their progress and classroom teachers' effectiveness.

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.

KAPPA III is a college preparatory school, which follows the Knowledge and Power philosophy of instruction, based on the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) pedagogy. Students and parents must sign a contract to show that are prepared to meet the school's aims by dedicating themselves to working towards achieving a college place. The students follow a rigorous schedule, working longer hours than in most other schools, with two periods of English language arts and math every day, to ensure that they have every opportunity to meet the State standards. The extended day ensures that there is time for additional studies such as band. The quality of their instrumental playing is very high by the time that they reach grade 8. As a result, many gain places at renowned music-specialist high schools.

The school runs smoothly and discipline is excellent. Good attendance is praised and lateness is strongly discouraged. These high standards lead to students being motivated to do well, paying attention in class and showing great respect to their teachers, known as professors. They wear their uniform with pride and parents report that their children are happy at school. Attendance rates are high as a result, and rising.

The curriculum is varied and designed to meet students' learning needs. The focus on music and dance builds students' confidence. The opportunities to take advanced courses, such as Regents in grade 8, ensure that they have opportunities to extend their learning. There is a very wide range of after school activities and educational visits and outside organizations significantly enhance the students' learning experience.

The administration team makes effective use of data to monitor progress at individual, grade and whole school levels and school planning structures respond to these identified needs. However, these systems are relatively new. The whole school community, and especially the teachers, is aware of the school goals. These are aspirational and are not specific to each student, with interim goals based on prior attainment. However, there are many interim checks on each student's progress, with very effective interventions where students are failing to reach the expected level. The principal, with skilled support from her assistant, has brought about significant, improved rigor to the collection and use of data and achievement is rising as a result. The inquiry team is working well, identifying the students for the focus group, and using a wide range of information and data to plan the strategies to support their learning. Since the last Quality Review, the school has made good progress in tracking students' progress over time. The Comprehensive Education Plan goals are now measurable and teaching teams now have common planning time. Professional development for new teachers is of better quality. Differentiated instruction is developing, but there is still scope for more differentiation by task.

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 collects a very wide range of information about its students, including results of quizzes, formal assessments, interim tests, attendance, and diagnostic data. This data is gathered consistently, for all students, grades, and subjects. Teachers keep comprehensive records of their students' progress, including marks in other major subject areas to help them to understand and take account of their strengths and weaknesses in literacy and numeracy. A science teacher, for example, could explain clearly how he considers students' reading levels when planning work and uses texts of varying difficulty with different groups within a class, to challenge the high achievers and support the low achievers. This excellent practice is spreading across the school. Every teacher has a very full data file, which includes previous years' scores for their students and Acuity (diagnostic) information. The progress of special education students and English language learners is monitored thoroughly, as is that of ethnic groups, gender groups, and students at risk of not making sufficient progress. Progress is tracked longitudinally, so that it can be measured over time and some comparisons are made with similar schools. There are good systems for training teachers in the use of data. Teachers attend all relevant courses and then turnkey information for their colleagues. They are very pleased with the success of this and as a result, all teachers are now using data well to help to raise achievement.

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 school's goals for improvement are clear and reflect its high expectations. The overall goal is that every student will gain a good high school place and go on to college. This aim is shared very well with all the school community. Every parent must sign a contract stating that they agree with the school's aims and will do all they can to support them. Teachers sign contracts with parents setting out their responsibilities to help children to achieve their aims. Teachers are very aware of their role and are fully accountable for their students' progress. The overall aim of seeking to ensure that every student achieves at least 80% in state tests is aspirational, but the school is not yet setting individual targets for each student, based on previous results, or including specific interim targets. Excellent information is given to parents and to students about their progress. Parents receive very frequent and regular report cards that are easily understood, telling them how well their children have achieved and what the next steps are in their learning. Teachers phone them regularly to let them know about successes as well as concerns. Students can contact teachers during the day and in the evening to find out how they can improve their work. Parents are invited into the school on a regular basis to discuss their children's progress and anything that they think relevant to their schoolwork. Beyond this, they report that the school is always welcoming and open to them, whenever there is an issue they want to raise.

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 fully reflects the aims of the school, to prepare the students for successful high school study. It provides a broad range of experiences and opportunities both within and outside the school day. The school uses main programs across all grades to ensure continuity and progression, supplemented with focused programs to meet specific need. In some classes, teachers are paired to work together to meet the needs of students who need extra help to succeed. Data shows that these students are making good progress. The extended day is used very well to provide further support for students who need it, to extend the range of courses to give good coverage of the arts and sport, and allow for advanced courses for those who will benefit. Students welcome this additional challenge, and are very pleased that they are prepared so well for college by completing some Regents courses early. The quality of musical work is exceptional for such a small school, with excellent bands, choral work, drumming and African dance sessions. To motivate all students, the school uses many successful strategies to interest them in going on to college, including the full involvement of GEARUP. This work is aimed especially at those from families with no history of college placements, and can arrange financial support where this will help.

Teachers plan their lessons to interest their students and there is a strong atmosphere of trust between teachers and students. Students identify the fact that all teachers know them as individuals and care about them as one of the main things they like about the school. They describe the school community as part of their family. Many teachers use strategies that differentiate instruction. They are able to explain how they have adapted tasks to meet the needs of students of differing abilities, by asking more challenging questions of the higher achievers, for example. There are occasions, though, when activities are not challenging enough for all students in the class, and high achievers sit patiently while work is explained again to those who did not understand.

The principal and school leaders plan carefully to make the best use of their budgets. As a result, the school has a good range of smart boards and laptops and more are on order. Attendance has a high priority. Parents are made very aware of the expectation that their children should attend every day the school is open and students are invited to lunch with the staff as a reward for 100% attendance. Consequently, attendance is rising and is above the City average.

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.

Professional development is very well planned to support the school’s goals. Much of this has concentrated on developing teachers’ skills in the use of data to measure and raise achievement, and there is now considerable expertise across all staff. Test results are analyzed rigorously using computer programs and instruction adjusted to make it

more effective. As an example, it was discovered that reading results were falling. Consultants were brought in, students' answers analyzed and professional development sessions organized for teachers. Every teacher is made aware of his or her responsibility to develop students' reading skills within their subject areas, along with a range of strategies for doing so. Reading levels are now rising steadily.

There is a full program of classroom visits, both formal and informal, many of which are followed by detailed feedback. Teachers are able to share ideas at grade planning meetings and to watch each other's lessons. New teachers praise the support that they get, including help from mentors, and there are sound induction procedures. There are very effective guidance systems to support students whose personal problems affect their progress. The school runs very smoothly and discipline is very good. Students are clear about what they can and cannot do and are fully aware, and respect, the school's very high expectations of them. They quickly learn that their actions affect others and they must be responsible learners: 'It's We Not Me at KAPPA III!' There are very many highly productive partnerships with outside organizations to develop students' technological and business skills, as well as to support their personal growth. Very effective links exist with, amongst others, GEARUP to prepare them for college, the UN, and a community organization, which provides a very good after-school program.

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 is a highly effective leader who has a very strong educational philosophy and a sincere belief in the potential of all her students. Her ability to translate this into systems and policies that work, and share her principles successfully with all her staff, is inspirational. This results in a consistent approach through the school to students' development. There is a special ethos at KAPPA III that is immediately evident upon crossing the lines in the hallways that 'divide' KAPPA from the other schools in the building. The principal builds teams and believes in the power of professionals working collaboratively towards stated goals. Very regular progress reports on every student provide opportunities for staff to monitor how well students are progressing and revise plans accordingly. School leaders analyze results to set goals for classes and grades at the start of the school year. They then set targets for teachers, review them to assess teachers' effectiveness and intervene where necessary. This works well and results in significant gains in achievement. There are examples of adjustments to instruction, guidance, or programs of study mid-year based on the evaluations of interim reviews, although goals are aspirational and not based on the students' prior achievement levels.

The principal, supported very effectively by the assistant principal, has an exceptionally clear vision for the future development of the school. This is shared with the whole school community, along with opportunities for them to make their own contributions to it. The school has already come a long way towards its vision of producing students who are independent, fully realize the importance of education to their future well-being, and are growing into responsible and caring young adults.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: KAPPA III	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