



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

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

Dates of review: May 19-20, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Maggie Hollingsworth

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

John F. Kennedy High School is a high school with 1857 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 29% Black, 66% Hispanic, 2% White, and 3% Asian and other students. The student body includes 42.4% English language learners and 29.7% special education students. Boys account for 60% of the students enrolled and girls account for 40%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 79%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 77% eligibility.

The school has undergone a reduction in size of almost 800 students since the previous Quality Review. It is one of four schools on the Kennedy Campus.

The school is split horizontally into four smaller learning communities or “houses”, each managed by an assistant principal.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Under the principal's influential and visionary leadership, the school is making significant and sustained improvement.
- Good management and very clear routines and procedures ensure that the school is safe and classrooms are calm and orderly.
- The principal, with his administration, carefully monitor each step in the school's progress towards its ambitious goals.
- The school analyses a very wide variety of data and uses it very well to understand student performance and identify where improvements are needed.
- Results are improving year on year because the school culture is strongly focused on making sure that students aim high and do their best.
- English language learners and special education students make good progress because the school gives them very effective support.
- There are high levels of mutual respect between students and staff and a strong sense of pride in the school's renaissance.
- The school's innovative technology programs are improving student motivation and providing a firm foundation for future developments.
- Supplementary classes, including the credit recovery program, are enabling students at risk of failure to make up the shortfall and graduate.
- There is very good collaboration and teamwork between staff that supports teachers and helps them learn from each other.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve the consistency of instruction so that all lessons match the best in engaging, motivating and meeting the needs of students.
- Further develop strategies to raise student achievement and seek ways to close the gap between the school's performance and that of other schools.
- Involve students more in setting their own goals and tracking their progress towards these goals.
- Continue the drive to improve attendance and eliminate class cutting.

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.

John F. Kennedy High School is well on the way to a successful renaissance through which student achievement and attendance are rising year on year. The principal's strong leadership plays a key role in this process. He is very well supported by an energetic and able young cabinet who manage the day to day running of the school efficiently and effectively. Five years ago the school was not a safe place, but it has radically changed. The school is calm and there are high levels of mutual respect between students and staff. This has been achieved through a curriculum that develops students' skills for the 21st century; by re-organizing and re-scheduling classes so that students receive the teaching that meets their needs; and by raising the students' expectations of what they can achieve. There are very effective programs for special education students and English language learners that provide them with teaching that is rigorous and ensure that they have the same opportunities to learn as other students. Across the school there are examples of very good instruction that engages and motivates students, but the school recognizes that not all of it is as good as it should be. The teachers form a strong team and work together to support each other and improve their instruction. They give up significant amounts of their time to help students before and after school and outside their scheduled lessons.

The school has become adept at managing, organizing and analyzing information in its large data bank. All of the staff have access to a complete and up-to-date picture of the performance of individuals and groups of students across the school so that they can take action quickly if students are falling behind in one subject. The inquiry team has led some of these developments by finding new ways to support students at risk of failure. The school sets ambitious goals for itself and for its students and makes regular checks to see if the students are achieving their goals. This process also helps administrators work out whether the school's programs and interventions are achieving the school's goals and, if not, what kind of changes need to be made.

The school has vigorously addressed the issues for improvement in the last Quality Review report. The students are better served by differentiated classroom instruction and additional programs. The school makes better use of data in goal setting and identifying student needs and to check the progress of students towards their goals, although students are not sufficiently involved in the process. The school's has tight procedures for monitoring student absence and attendance has risen to 82%. However, there are still too many students who cut afternoon classes.

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 very good procedures for assessing and recording the outcomes of periodic assessments and other tests and examinations. Training has helped teachers understand and use data to compare and contrast results across subjects. Because each student has a personal profile that follows them through their grade, students and staff can call up information quickly and share it with counselors and students to inform advisory sessions. The school's computerized data system enables staff to access information easily on a shared data base so that everyone has a clear and up-to-date view of each student's current and past attendance and performance across all subjects. Assessment data is constantly updated and used at common planning meetings to compare student progress over time and between subjects. Staff know, for example, that Regents pass rates in U.S. History were lower than other subjects and are providing extra classes so that students can improve their scores and hence graduate. The school is also developing its use of systems to predict students' performance and compare this data with students' current achievement. As a result the school has been able to forecast the demand for early intervention to prevent students underachieving. The principal and cabinet have developed a very effective visual tracking system to compare the progress of student subgroups and grades. The impact of this is evident in the speed with which administrators can identify where students are not performing as well as they should or where an extra push is needed to help them achieve their goals. The school's data also shows clearly how attendance and tardiness affect student achievement and this has added impetus to the school's drive to reduce absence. The principal takes pride in the significant improvement in the school's performance compared with schools with a similar student profile, but recognizes that the time is right to raise the bar and compare outcomes with a wider range of high schools.

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 sets clear, measurable goals for the students' performance which are articulated in its Comprehensive Education Plan and shared with staff. Teachers and counselors set targets for the students at the start of the year but do not yet involve the students sufficiently in this process. Because each of the school's four houses is small, staff know the students well and keep a close check on their progress. As a result, the school is able to arrange for timely interventions to enable students to make up credit shortfalls or retake Regents tests to gain a higher grade. The school's philosophy of inclusion for its special education students and English language learners underpins a strong and successful program through which students have made significant gains in standardized tests. The school's expectations of all students have increased and the majority of students have responded positively. The school has two advanced placement classes and is planning more next year. The honors roll is growing. There

are good examples of high quality student work displayed in corridors and classrooms for others to aspire to. Many students sign up readily for supplementary classes, including the credit recovery program to help them improve their grades and graduate. The school culture is strongly focused on making sure that students aim high and do their best. Nevertheless the school has an uphill struggle to involve parents in their children's education. It has achieved some success, especially in engaging parents in discussions about their children's progress, and is continuing to seek ways to further motivate parents to play a more active part in school life.

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 proficient.

As a result of its analysis of student motivation and achievement the school has radically overhauled its curriculum. The Career and Technical Education program is strongly focused on using technology to master skills for the modern labor market. This strategic shift in direction has been accompanied by the realignment of resources so that the school has modern digital equipment and suitably trained staff. The students have responded well with improved motivation and attendance and are achieving additional credits and, in several cases, industry standard certification. The school's approach to the curriculum for special education students and English language learners has provided greater rigor in instruction for these groups. By using collaborative approaches to teaching between subject teachers and specialist support staff and ensuring that English language learners are mainly taught in English by subject specialists, the school has improved the students' progress and Regents pass rates. Across the school the quality of instruction overall varies in the degree to which it motivates and engages students and the school has some way to go to ensure that all teaching matches the quality of the best. There were several lessons where the teachers' questioning was incisive and demanded answers that stretched students to think and think again, but others where the pace was too slow and the teaching too dull to fully engage students. Across the school, the levels of support and coaching for students are very high and teachers give up their time willingly to help and mentor students. Guidance counselors provide a very good service in coordinating this support and ensuring that students have no excuse to fall through the net. Attendance has been rising steadily and is at its highest rate for 13 years. There are very tight monitoring procedures to follow up absence. One student reported, "If you're absent one day, they call your house twice!" Nevertheless, too many students cut classes after lunch.

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 cabinet are passionate and powerful advocates for school improvement. Through effective teamwork they ensure that expectations are well known and that staff are routinely held accountable for achieving them. The principal and assistant principals use their regular classroom walks and observations to assess

whether teaching is meeting the needs of students. Their observations are fed back to teachers to help them improve and contribute to a whole school picture of instructional quality. There are good opportunities for staff to collaborate over new approaches to instruction and learn from each other. Staff are becoming more familiar with observing each other's lessons, although not everyone is yet comfortable with the practice. The school schedules common planning time for teachers and counselors who teach the same "block" of students, as well as tri-weekly meetings for subject specialists. This dual approach has maintained the integrity and rigor of subject teaching alongside the ability of staff to see student progress across and between subjects. Coupled with good mentoring, it helps induct and establish new teachers very well into the school culture.

The school has clear routines that keep students safe. Security is tight but not oppressive. One student commented, "Someone is always there. You can't get away with anything". The corridor culture is friendly, although this sometimes leads to tardiness to lessons. Classrooms are orderly and most students are ready to learn. The school uses high quality corridor displays to celebrate good work and attendance and provides tangible rewards to encourage others to succeed. The number of suspensions has fallen significantly, a clear indicator that the school is becoming a calmer, safer place. The school has a tradition of using its prestigious sports program to motivate students to attend school and improve their academics. This continues to be a successful feature of the school's youth development 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 has set demanding goals for the school. He has established very effective systems for checking regularly that the school is on track to achieve its targets, updating the data charts on his wall almost daily. The cabinet plays a critical role in this process, using each other as sounding boards for new ideas and interpretations of the data. Because it is constantly analyzing data about student achievement, the administration knows very quickly if any cohort or group is falling behind. Furthermore, the close involvement of teams of staff in tracking the progress of individual students in small learning communities means that small steps in student progress are recognized and targets set for them to achieve even more.

The school uses the data from monitoring to check whether its programs and interventions are making the required difference. The school acts flexibly if it finds a program has not been as effective as it should have been in helping students pass tests and examinations. For example, the school established a comprehensive program of credit recovery and extended day classes when the data showed that students were not accumulating enough credits to graduate. The school's decisions to alter the way it provided support for special education students and for English language learners were similarly made in response to data which showed that instruction through pull-out and Spanish language teaching was leading to significant underachievement.

The principal provides very strong leadership to the whole school community. He has been highly influential in improving the school's results and its standing in the community. The plans for the school's development, which include restructuring the school into four vertical houses, have been well received by staff, students and parents. The school is very well placed to accelerate its current level of improvement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: John F Kennedy 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 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