

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

The Kensington School

Elementary School 179

**202 Avenue C
Brooklyn
NY 11218**

Principal: Valerie Joseph

Dates of review: December 1 - 2, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Karina Costantino

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Kensington School is an elementary school with 934 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 6% Black, 30% Hispanic, 27% White, and 37% Asian students. The student body includes 42% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 92.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 84.3% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

The teachers have a high regard and respect for the principal and other school leaders, which successfully builds a culture where staff commit to improve their teaching practice. School leaders collect and organize a good range of data across subjects that provide a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses in student learning. The school does not yet consistently analyze data rigorously, resulting in an inability to track the performance and progress of all subgroups, particularly higher achieving students. Although data is a point of discussion at all grade meetings, the classroom teachers do not take into account the different starting point of each child in relation to setting long-term goals. Individual teacher assessment drives professional development through observations and walk-throughs, but there is currently no professional development to address the use of data to differentiate lessons to improve student outcomes.

In collaboration with teachers, school leaders have initiated a uniform policy of using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessments for baseline data for all students in grades one through five. Teachers receive professional development from outside consultants to assist them in setting interim and benchmark goals to measure progress. This is being implemented in English language arts (ELA) and math. English language learners receive a variety of resources and after school programs to improve student outcomes. English language learner (ELL) teachers and classroom teachers review and interpret proficiency levels in each of the areas of the NYSESLAT exam. This assists teachers in planning for flexible grouping. In some classes, the English language teacher pushes into the classroom and team-teaches with the classroom teacher. This benefits the students because they receive more support in understanding and developing expressive and receptive language relating to the subject content. Although resources of this nature exist for ELL students, additional resources are not visible for all subgroups, particularly the higher performing students in each grade.

Guidance and support services have developed strong relationships with children and families, which has a positive impact on student attendance. Families feel welcome and valued within the school, which has developed a number of activities, such as International Night, that have successfully helped to increase parental involvement.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders collect and organize a good range of data across subjects, which provide a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses in student learning.
- Collaboration and a good range of data ensure that strategic planning addresses accurately identified needs.
- Teachers respect the principal and other school leaders as professionals, maintaining a culture in which most members of staff are committed to improving their practice.
- The school's guidance and support services develop strong relationships with parents and families, which have a positive impact on student attendance.
- Through the good use of data, school leaders develop a clear picture of the effectiveness of school improvement initiatives.

What the school needs to improve

- Analyze data more rigorously to provide a clearer picture of the progress of all subgroups, particularly higher achieving students.
- Refine the goals set for students across subjects so that projections for their end-of-school achievement derive from a clear understanding of students' different starting points.
- Develop standardized instructional and grading rubrics to help communicate expectations to students.
- Improve teachers' use of data to plan differentiated instruction to ensure rapid progress for all students, particularly higher achievers, and support them in continuously evaluating and improving their classroom practices.
- Establish and implement systems to ensure that plans for improvement, for the whole school as well as for students and teachers, include measurable, time-framed interim goals against which to evaluate progress.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school collates and makes good use of a broad range of data. There is a uniform policy of using the Fountas and Pennell Benchmark Assessments for baseline data for all students in grades one through five. Teachers receive professional development from outside consultants to assist them in setting interim and benchmark goals against which to measure progress in ELA and math. ELL teachers and classroom teachers use data from the NYSESLAT exam to review students' proficiency levels in each of the areas', which assists teachers in planning for flexible grouping. In some classes this results in the English language teacher providing push-in support in the classroom, including team teaching with the classroom teacher. This gives students increased support and helps develop their understanding of both language and subject content. There is also a variety of resources and after-school programs to improve ELL student outcomes. However, detailed analysis of data and provision of additional resources are not apparent for all subgroups, particularly the higher achieving students in each grade

The principal and cabinet inform parents three times a year about their child's progress. Parents receive student goals on report cards, as well as interim progress reports midway between marking periods. In addition, parents receive information at parent teacher conferences, curriculum conferences, PTA meetings, individual parent meetings and teleconferences. The school conducts parent workshops each year to discuss goals and ways parents can actively support their child's learning.

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Each of the school's constituency groups are actively involved in creating the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan and revisits it as they receive new data throughout the year. Parents feel very much a part of the process, although they would welcome greater involvement by parents from the various cultures represented in the school.

Collection and analysis of a good range of data enables the school to accurately identify most student needs. Teacher assessment binders in each classroom help staff identify trends in student performance in English language arts, writing and math. The science teachers have checklists to identify student needs and progress. Curriculum mapping engages staff in cross-grade collaborative planning. The inquiry team is setting smart goals for targeted English language learners, modeling goal setting for all teachers, school wide. Although present in English language arts and math, goal setting is only just beginning in other core subjects, such as science and social studies. The principal recognizes that teachers need additional opportunities to strengthen their skills in data

analysis to enable them to plan differentiation of instruction to improve student outcomes, particularly for high performing students. Teachers, parents and students do not have a clear understanding of students' different starting points in relation to projections for their end-of-school achievement because clearly defined goals are lacking across core subjects. Most lessons lack academic rigor because of this lack of clear overall learning objectives.

Rubrics are used in English language arts, math and writing. However, the school does not have standardized instructional and grading rubrics to convey clear expectations to students, and to help them understand what they need to do to improve. Similarly, where there are teacher comments on students' work, these do not indicate next steps. Parents currently receive information about student goals in English language arts and math. Students are working toward creating their own goals in other core subjects, but there is not a consistent approach to this throughout the school.

School leaders and faculty meet regularly at grade conferences to discuss, plan and revisit goals. School leaders prioritize attendance and communicate high expectations for attendance to students and their families.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the schoolwork is underdeveloped with proficient features.

School staff and parents respect the principal and other school leaders as professionals, resulting in a culture where most members of staff are committed to improving their practice. The school has a uniform standards approach to the curriculum, which follows the New York State standards in reading, writing and math. Curriculum mapping in literacy, math, social studies and science creates a uniformity of instruction and grades share outcomes with each other.

The use of data in planning lessons does not ensure rapid progress for all students, especially higher achieving students, because teachers do not consistently and effectively differentiate instruction. Teachers group students for instruction, but then carry out the same activity, albeit with a different focus, without enrichment or sufficient challenge. In particular, the school does not yet offer level three and four students a rigorous academic curriculum. Students say that lessons are not always challenging and that they are bored during some lessons.

Teachers do not develop lessons or activities for individual students based on individual skills or needs. Although rubrics are on student work in some cases, they are inconsistent and do not appear on student work throughout the building, so students do not always know what is expected of them or what they are supposed to do to improve their work. The school offers an academic intervention/enrichment block daily during the school day but this does not always address student interest.

The school ensures that student behavior is well managed. Use of the SAVE room for students who misbehave preserves the integrity of the classroom, and helps maintain a school tone that is positive and conducive to learning.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Student learning outcomes drive the development of professional goals. Every teacher develops professional learning goals in collaboration with the principal and assistant principal in charge of the grade and subject area. Administrators use the formal and informal observation process to monitor teachers' progress towards professional goals. They also conduct learning walks and look at student work. Teachers feel supported by the school leadership. They say that the assistant principals provide them with resources and professional development, and give them immediate feedback on any concerns.

Common planning time allows teachers in each grade to discuss student outcomes, revisit curriculum mapping and student goals and adjust them accordingly. To improve the rigor of instruction, support personnel and classroom teachers discuss individual student goals and progress. The inquiry team, which includes classroom teachers, focuses on the English language learners in the school's bottom third student population. Members of the inquiry team share their findings with the entire staff at faculty conferences, embedding the inquiry process throughout the building.

The staff development plan is based on teacher need and experience. Model classrooms enable teachers to observe best practices. Administrators observe classes regularly and give verbal and written feedback about strengths and areas in need of improvement. To improve best practice, members of staff freely express their opinions regarding curriculum and programs. This demonstrates a true spirit of trust and collaboration as teachers and administration work together to improve learning outcomes. However, there is not a culture of teacher self-reflection with a focus on continuous evaluation and improvement of instructional practices. The emphasis for all professional development centers on remediation rather than differentiation, enrichment and academic rigor.

The school's guidance and support services develop strong relationships with families, and these have a positive impact on student attendance. Parents feel welcome and are active participants in the school. The school also benefits from effective partnerships with a number of outside agencies, such as the YMCA and the Department of Education, which provide support for students and families and help promote parent involvement.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

Through the good use of data, school leaders develop a clear overall picture of the effectiveness of school improvement initiatives. However, the school's plans for student and whole-school improvement do not have interim checkpoints to monitor and measure progress. Similarly, although all teachers create long-term goals for students, there are no benchmarks or interim goals to measure progress towards meeting these. The school is also lacking a consistent measure that shows students and families what progress students are making towards meeting their individual student goals. Individual

long-term goals are not differentiated according to students' starting levels, particularly in respect to higher achieving students.

Teachers look at data at monthly grade meetings. This gives them an opportunity to adjust their practice to address the individual needs of their students, though not all are equally skilled at following this through effectively for all their students. They also use this time to identify trends in and between grades and to adjust their curriculum mapping to meet the needs of their students. School leaders establish interim checkpoints three times a year to monitor learning outcomes for all subgroups and individual students in English language arts, writing and math, but they do not monitor progress in other core subjects in the same way.

The school's Comprehensive Educational Plan is a working document that reflects its interim and long-term plans. These goals are consistent with the school vision and are aligned with the results of the Progress Report for the school. The school has set itself challenging goals for improvement. It has the capacity to develop and implement systems and procedures to promote academic, personal and professional growth and to achieve these goals.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Kensington School	△	▷	✓	+
Overall QR Score		X		
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?		X		
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?		X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?		X					
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?		X					
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X				
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X					
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X				
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?		X					
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X				
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?		X					
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?		X					
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X				
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?		X					
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed