

Quality Review Report

2009-2010

The Kensington School

Elementary School 179

**202 Avenue C
Brooklyn
NY 11218**

Principal: Valerie Joseph

Dates of review: November 4 - 5, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Karina Costantino

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Kensington School is an elementary school with 893 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 6% Black, 32% Hispanic, 25% White, and 37% Asian students. The student body includes 41% English language learners and 61% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 95%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal successfully creates a culture where teachers are empowered. The second grade teachers have an active inquiry team, focusing on English language learners on their grade, which functions very well. The level of collaboration throughout the building varies on each grade so consequently the fourth grade is at the beginning stages. Insufficient opportunities to meet as grade teams limit the chance to provide support and share best practices throughout the school. Having an open door policy, school leaders provide effective support to the staff through a range of professional development opportunities. This includes the creative use of the United Federation of Teachers' center, the math and literacy coaches, and an external publishing company. School leaders also provide professional development to create teacher experts on each grade in each core subject. This builds capacity within the school allowing teachers to learn from each other. Last year's inquiry team members assign themselves to grade teams from kindergarten through grade 5 to further the inquiry process throughout the school. An effective examination of data drives the focus on each grade. Although each grade team is at a different place, they are all functioning consistently well and this is helping to improve student outcomes.

The principal validated teachers' concerns about differentiating instruction by purchasing a new reading program. Teachers applaud the new program and it has helped to create a collaborative tone throughout the school. This standard and research-based program utilizes a "response to intervention", three-tier model, which helps the teachers to identify students' individual goals. The school has made significant progress in English language arts and math across all student sub groups. Support services push in to classrooms enabling teachers to provide differentiation for all students with a special focus on strategies. A "principal's program" addresses the need to provide a more rigorous curriculum for higher-performing students. Classroom visitation identifies the need for more professional development in this area to increase academic rigor. Teachers do not have added time to reflect on current practice before moving on to the additional components of the new reading program. Nevertheless, they differentiate instruction, at varying levels in all classes. This has enabled sub groups, particularly English language learners, and special education students to improve.

Parents are enthusiastic about their children's learning and support the high expectations. Ongoing communication with teachers creates a relationship of mutual respect. The staff support students' needs well, so they are happy and enjoy school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support improvements in learning.
 - The school has a useful new reading program, selected by teachers from kindergarten through grade 5, which provides continuity in reading throughout the building. Additionally, the program has a built-in parent component, which allows parents to help their children at home.
 - Teachers of English as a second language push into each classroom on each grade. This enables teachers to differentiate instruction further for all students.
- The school is a safe place where students are engaged in learning and receive a good level of support for their personal and academic growth.
 - In accordance with the Chancellor's "Respect for All initiative for 2009-2010, the school implements a "don't laugh at me/operation respect" program. This fosters a positive tone among the diverse ethnicities in the school seen in the way students respect and support each other.
 - Teachers are nurturing and sensitive to students' special needs, which builds their overall confidence and improves academic outcomes.
- The principal has created a learning community that focuses on student outcomes with a vision to accelerate learning.
 - Leaders establish bottom-line school goals, which they share with the entire school community providing a clear focus to improve student performance. In addition, each classroom has a data center for students. This uses formative assessment as a motivational tool for students to self-direct their progress.
 - The school leadership team meets regularly to examine student progress as it relates to the Comprehensive Educational Plan. They revise programs where necessary to provide students with the best learning outcomes.
- Effective student support services and collaboration with families provide students with a wide range of opportunities to grow academically and socially.
 - The school has a number of constructive after-school programs, such as the YMCA and SES Brienza Testing Model. It conducts a number of useful parent workshops to provide additional opportunities for students and families to grow.
 - The guidance counselor and social worker support parents by distributing a needs assessment to all parents in September. They use the results of the assessment to provide workshops when parents express an area of interest. For example, parents attend a workshop prior to the parent teacher conferences helping them to know the types of questions to ask.
- Professional learning opportunities are purposeful and aligned with the school's goals and curriculum.
 - Coaches model best practices and provide tiered professional development to meet the various needs of teachers in order to improve their practice.

- Teachers identify themselves as experts in core subjects for each grade. They receive additional professional development in those areas and turnkey to other teachers. This serves as an effective in-house resource while the principal is building capacity within the school.
- Parents have valuable opportunities to be involved in their children's learning and accelerate their progress.
 - The parent coordinator gives helpful ongoing professional development for parents providing them with access to student goals and progress.
 - The school offers effective workshops throughout the year, such as "questions to ask during parent conferences" and "reading to your child". These enable parents to be active participants in their child's learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend and expand teacher teams on each grade to share good practice, develop tools, and analyze data to plan curriculum and instruction.
 - Teachers have insufficient opportunities to work as part of grade teachers' teams. Currently they share and track trends by looking at data solely on their grade. They do not track school-wide trends in cross grade teams. This restricts them in fulfilling school-wide goals. Some teams use protocols to manage time and move the agenda forward effectively, but this is not consistent across the school.
- Expand the use of data analysis to evaluate and reflect on programs within the school that lead to effective professional collaborations.
 - The school does not encourage teachers to reflect on practice before moving on to a new part of the reading curriculum. Professional developers from the company present many components of the program at once. This impedes mastery and does not allow the teachers to develop their confidence.
- Expand the observation tool to develop teachers' professional goals and plans that reflect and support the attainment of school-wide goals.
 - Formal observations lack a specific focus on the school's main goals. School leaders do not make use of the identification of teachers' strengths and weaknesses to differentiate professional development more effectively.
- Ensure that all constituent groups are involved in setting goals that include greater levels of challenge for higher performing students.
 - Although the principal creates classes for high performing students in grades 3 through 5, the curriculum is not rigorous enough to challenge the range of student ability within those classrooms.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: The Kensington School	△	▷	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?				X
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X			
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?				X			
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed