

Quality Review

Report

2009-2010

**Knowledge and Power Preparatory Academy VII Middle
School**

Middle School 596
300 Willoughby Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11205

Principal: Rosa Smith-Norman

Dates of review: January 6 - 7, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Deena Abu-Lughod

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Knowledge and Power Preparatory Academy VII Middle School has 196 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 88% Black, 11% Hispanic, and 1% multiracial students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 87.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

At 'KAPPA VII', students and teachers refer to each other as scholars and professors in classes named after Ivy League schools to reinforce students' college-bound aspirations. The school is in its third year of operation and now located in its own wings in a multi-school building. The school values good appearance and tracks attendance, punctuality, and behavior, resulting in an orderly environment that students and parents appreciate. The addition of talented staff and administrators this year has contributed to accelerating improvements in conditions for adult and student learning. Extended time programs offer skills-based support to at risk students while Regents classes and travel opportunities motivate high achievers. Students are most enthusiastic about content area classes where projects allow them to grapple with real-life issues, engage in higher level thinking, and use technology. Not all learning opportunities promote high-level engagement. Teachers in other content areas are receiving professional development and feedback so that these good models extend throughout the school. The instructional model of "do now", "aim", and medial and final summary clarifies expectations across classrooms, but teachers do not always connect these components coherently.

The administration has conceived of an excellent way to measure student performance in literacy and math, which it is about to implement so it can know which students are on track to make a year's worth of progress. Teachers understand assessment data well and use student work, classroom discussions, and learning style activities to glean information about how each student learns best. However, lesson planning does not yet reflect consistent use of this data, and the expectations for reading and writing volume and quality vary considerably. Although there are limited arts courses, teachers often offer students options to present their work artistically. Teachers and students have recently begun to set goals together so that students understand their strengths and next steps. Students are developing cooperative skills, and are becoming more adept at using rubrics, especially in social studies and the humanities, for greater independence and self-monitoring. However, many students state that they do not know what they need to do to improve their work.

The school has structures that facilitate collaboration across subject areas and grades to develop its vision. It has not yet articulated this vision clearly enough, or staged and phased its goals in these areas so it can plan more deliberately and evaluate the effectiveness of its initiatives against expected outcomes.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Strategic hiring practices and the pro-active pursuit of external resources has led to the effective launch of initiatives to improve the school's curriculum, instruction, and environment.
 - Two new highly qualified assistant principals lead faculty effectively to capitalize on the newly established daily planning time to develop a common understanding of good practice as the school develops its curriculum. As a result, the school has made rapid progress in implementing its action plans aiming for a qualitative leap in performance.
 - The school knows its scholars' social, emotional and health needs well, and has marshaled external partners to provide supports. A new guidance counselor is building internal capacity. As a result, identified students are referred with their families to outside resources or to school-based supports such as "chat and chews" for girls in need of positive role models. A community-based organization offers art and physical activities after school so students enjoy well-rounded growth.
- The administration and teachers use an increasing range of data to identify priorities for planning instruction, organizing supports for struggling students and motivating high performers.
 - Teachers use ARIS to understand their students' performance over time. The school analyzed item data from State tests to identify the top 10 skill priorities in literacy and math. It is now weaving them into the curriculum. Acuity results provide the basis for skill-specific extended day programs for underperforming students. High performing students have access to a science Regents course and school trips to Canada and France.
 - The school has identified some subgroups, such as overage students and students with individualized education programs. It assigns these subgroups to the same classes with additional adult staff to provide individual support. Double-periods for math, the school's priority area for growth, provide greater time-on-task to ensure progress.
- School structures and communications reinforce student and parent commitment to high expectations and participation in decision-making.
 - The principal used the students' responses in the Learning Environment Survey to create structures to give them more voice in decisions that affect them, so they feel valued. There is now a student government, and students can propose "spirit days", fun activities with a social purpose.
 - Consultations with parents led to the use of mailings to ensure the receipt of timely information about activities and programs. Quarterly progress reports address behavior and academic performance, including specific skill strengths revealed by Acuity assessments. The new parent coordinator actively introduces ARIS parent link, resulting in usage rates that exceed the city average.

- There is a data-informed system aligning professional development to school goals and providing differentiated support to enhance teachers' practice.
 - Frequent formal and informal observations result in clear and actionable written feedback to teachers that align with the school's instructional priorities. Mentoring, coaching, classroom visits, and the timely provision of materials, all help teachers to implement the recommendations successfully. Teachers reflect regularly on the quality of professional development so the administration can evaluate their initiatives and respond effectively.
 - New math teachers quickly incorporate what they learn from weekly off-site training and actively seek and receive support from seasoned experts. Consultants aid curriculum-mapping efforts and the school invites all teachers to participate in weeklong summer professional development. As a result, teachers, half of whom are new to the school this year, are rapidly improving their practice.
- School leaders and faculty co-plan and evaluate the effectiveness of their implemented curriculum and practice in relation to student outcomes.
 - The school uses daily common planning time efficiently to share insights about how students respond to new instructional initiatives. This allows leaders to identify school-wide needs and teachers to have meaningful input.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop differentiated instructional practices so that lessons engage students at higher levels of thinking and provide the scaffolds and extensions necessary for them to exceed their current levels.
 - The school has begun to use assessment data to identify skill priorities at the grade level and to identify students by performance level and learning style. This information is not yet used consistently in literacy and math classes to plan activities that support different entry points or engage students. There are good models in other content areas from where to extend good practice.
 - The instructional model offers opportunities for whole group, small group and independent work. However, the connections between these components are not consistently clear. Many teachers lack protocols to foster purposeful student collaboration in group work, to build the confidence of all students to participate more actively in class.
- Embed grade-level benchmarks in unit planning matched to rubrics and specific next steps to ensure spiraling rigor through the grades.
 - Teachers now post exemplary work with rubrics on bulletin boards that they review monthly. The school has not yet developed a common understanding of standard-level writing to ensure increasing rigor and consistency in scoring, and comments do not always identify meaningful next steps so that students know what to do to reach their potential.

- The school has just added an eighth grade and is now poised to evaluate its efforts to develop its curriculum and commence vertical alignment. Some teachers have begun to collaborate on cross-curricular units in language arts and social studies to make good on the school's aspiration to infuse literacy throughout the content areas. Students are beginning to keep reading logs, but completion is not routine, and they are not yet encouraged to read systematically across a range of genre.
- Create interim checkpoints that align with school-wide goals in order to measure progress by grade, class and subgroup to reveal trends and evaluate the effectiveness of instructional practice and the curriculum.
 - Teachers collect summative and periodic assessment data, but the school has not developed an understanding of the relationship between these data points. It is now ready to implement an excellent system for comparing the growth of its current students with students from the previous year to enable it to create goals with interim benchmarks. In the absence of these benchmarks, the school is not yet able to adjust goals to evaluate the impact of instruction.
 - The school has identified useful data elements and subgroup differences, but not all teachers use tracking tools. Leaders are working to develop tools that can summarize performance and progress by class, grade, and subgroup to track improvement more closely.
- Extend supports for teacher teams so that professional collaboration connects teaching practice to the evidence of learning.
 - The school uses common planning well to develop curriculum and foster greater teacher collaboration. The assistant principals chair most meetings, but the school is developing protocols with the intent of distributing leadership and empowering its critical friends groups.
 - While some teachers consider the inquiry process the domain of a small group, teacher teams are developing processes to analyze data and student work to support students at different levels. Currently, this analysis leads to out-of-classroom supports and has not yet had an impact on classroom practice.
- Formalize short and long-term action plans to include checkpoints for evaluating the effectiveness of the emerging progress monitoring and goal setting processes, and the investment in professional development.
 - Ambitious action plans in the Comprehensive Educational Plan provide a good roadmap for future development and have advanced at an accelerated pace. However, these plans do not specify performance outcomes, timelines, and interim goals, which inhibit the school's ability to evaluate its progress and celebrate its notable success, thus weakening their long-term impact.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Knowledge and Power Preparatory Academy VII Middle School	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>	△	➤	✓	+			
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>	△	➤	✓	+			
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>	△	➤	✓	+			
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							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed