



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Division of Performance and Accountability
2010-2011**

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Robert F. Kennedy

M169

**110 East 88th Street
New York
NY 10128**

Principal: Susan Finn

Dates of review: March 24th-28th, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Carolyn Yaffe

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Robert F. Kennedy is a K-12 school with 262 students from Kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 41% Black, 53% Hispanic, 3% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 97% special education students. Boys account for 80% of the students enrolled and girls account for 20%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 83.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teaching practice is rooted in differentiation so that appropriately leveled work is designed for all students.
 - Across classrooms, teaching practices, including differentiation of process, product and content demonstrate a unified school vision of how students learn best. Teachers create flexible groupings based on detailed knowledge of quantitative and qualitative student data. Across classrooms, teachers effectively use these groupings as the foundation for differentiation which then includes appropriate texts, graphic organizers that include different levels of support and choice in product and/or process. In addition, strategic use of classroom paraprofessionals provide additional support to specific students or groups as needed. As a result, students are able to articulate what they are working on and why and demonstrate enthusiasm about their high quality work products.
- Across sites programming and scheduling decisions and allocation of support resources reflect thoughtful analysis of individual strengths and needs to best serve students
 - The principal thoughtfully and effectively manages appropriate teacher placements and classroom paraprofessional pairings across 5 different school sites. Teacher/paraprofessional pairings are reviewed on a yearly basis and reorganizations are made so the most effective partnerships are in place to support student needs. Despite the challenges of working with several different school sites, common grade level planning time is built into all teachers' schedules and a weekly common meeting time for paraprofessionals is also organized so that professional development for paraprofessionals can be on-going. As a result, the instructional capacity of paraprofessionals has increased and teachers report effective partnerships with paraprofessionals.
- Students are known in depth and cared for by all staff members, creating classroom environments that are highly conducive to learning
 - The school uses School Wide Information System (SWIS) to gather data around student incidents and referrals; this data is analyzed to guide improvements to school culture and climate. As a result of analysis of SWIS data last year, the school strategically reorganized support staff during key transitions, which reduced incidents. This year, administration noted that many student referrals took place during double-period literacy blocks, which led them to focus on the type of and differentiation for tasks students were being asked to complete during these long chunks of instructional time.
 - Across classrooms and in student meetings, students are able to articulate what they are learning, why they are learning and demonstrate high levels of interest and pride in their work, particularly their writing and math portfolios. They indicated that they felt strongly supported by their

teachers and their principal and that they liked that “teachers relate to you” and “cooperate with you.”

- The curriculum offers a range of rigorous tasks so that all students are engaged with their learning
 - As a deliberate decision to highlight rigorous expectations, the school community asks all teachers to plan units of curricula and corresponding texts with general education grade level material. The expectations for teachers is that, using State standards and student data as the starting point, they target appropriate standards for the class, set appropriate goals connected to those standards for each student and scaffold tasks so that students are able to meet State standards. As a result, students are engaged with work that is preparing them to re-enter community schools at the grade level appropriate for their age.
 - Across classrooms, tasks that students were asked to complete and work products demonstrated an emphasis on rigorous habits and tasks. For example, in several separate literacy blocks, students were asked to analyze literature for theme and make thematic connections with previous texts. As a result, across grade levels students are learning and demonstrating increasing competency with analysis skills.
- Teachers use and analyze common assessments to gather valuable student information and inform instructional decisions that improve student outcomes.
 - The school uses a computer-based system that can generate assessments based on standard and skill. Grade levels (or mixed grade levels) choose common skills based on analysis of student work and generate and implement common formative assessments. Data is analyzed on an on-going basis in weekly meetings to identify next instructional steps. Teachers use this data in conjunction with State testing data and less formal classroom level data to identify and target strengths and areas of need for each individual student (a,c).
- The school has invested heavily in the training of staff in youth development so that students are supported in their personal and academic growth
 - Over a period of 5 years the school has developed and refined its Positive Behavioral Intervention Systems (PBIS) with heavy input from and training for the faculty. An effective system including a rubric, section sheets and immediate structure for analysis of sheets is currently in place; this data informs a school-wide club program that has different incentives for positive behavior. In addition to PBIS, the school has also facilitated an emotional literacy program that creates a safe structure to share feelings so that they can be acknowledged and dealt with to set the stage for academic work. As a result of these structures, students are regularly recognized and rewarded for positive behavior and students who need additional support or intervention are able to be identified and addressed on a daily basis. In addition to a reduction in disruptive behavior reported through SWIS data, teachers report improvements in both classroom and school culture as an outgrowth of these programs. (a,b)

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the structure of professional collaborations so that they are more clearly aligned to measurable goals to focus more closely on closing the achievement gap
 - While all teachers are involved in professional collaborations working to adjust instruction to better meet students' needs, there is not currently a clear and unified set of expectations or structure around goal-setting or analysis of student work and data. This lack of clarity of expectations can hinder how effectively teams address their students' instructional needs. In addition, teacher team meetings are currently primarily facilitated by assistant principals, who decide on priorities and set agendas. Teachers do not serve as team leaders or primary facilitators; this limits their capacity to build leadership skills.
- Develop more formal systems to inform parents of student expectations and progress and engage parents in decision-making so that they can support school goals from home
 - While the vast majority of parents stressed the accessibility of their children's teachers, most parents also expressed a desire to have additional formal structures for the communication of expectations and assessment of their child's progress towards those expectations. While some of the school's sites have formal systems in place such as a daily communication log, other sites rely on the discretion of the teacher. As a result, parents express inconsistent levels of satisfaction regarding communication and their ability to support their child from home.
 - Currently there is inconsistent outreach regarding parents' association meetings and parent workshops. This inconsistency limits the ability for a parent to be a meaningful participant in the decision-making of their child's school.
- Develop unified systems to track the progress of academic goals at all levels of the school to ensure that student achievement is raised.
 - Currently there are uneven systems to capture and track progress towards goals at all levels of the school. While some teachers create formal goals and have clear tracking systems, others do not. Additionally, the cabinet does not have a clear picture of where they are in relation to school-wide goals because interim check-points have not been established. This limits the ability to make timely adjustments to meet goals.
- Develop administrative level systems to formalize the evaluation of individual teachers and professional collaborations
 - At this time there is informal and inconsistent evaluation of the effectiveness of teacher teams and of systems to evaluate teacher development. This can limit the ability to support teachers in and hold them accountable for their work.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Robert F. Kennedy	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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	

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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		

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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		

Quality Review Scoring Key

UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed
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