

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Robert F. Kennedy Community High School

High School Q670

75-40 Parsons Boulevard

Queens

NY 11366

Principal: Ira Pernick

Dates of review: March 7 - 8, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Juan Mendez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Robert F. Kennedy Community High School is a high school with 733 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 11% Black, 33% Hispanic, 27% White, and 29% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 89.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Resources are aligned to the school academic goals resulting in better support for student learning needs.
 - School leaders use resources and make organizational decisions to optimize the school's instructional goals. These strategic decisions match teacher assignments to areas of expertise. Scheduling arrangements allow teachers and students to meet daily in advisory periods and every teacher tutors students once per week. In addition, teacher teams gather weekly to evaluate subject area goals and inquiry teams meet to evaluate student performance data to better align pedagogy to the school's instructional goals. As a result, teachers are able to provide feedback to the rest of the staff on how instruction can be improved to raise student achievement.
- The school has established a safe, respectful and environment that supports student and adult learning leading to a collaborative and nurturing school culture.
 - School leaders and faculty drive efforts to cultivate a safe and nurturing environment for all students. The implementation of advisory classes provides the personalization, intimacy and sense of family where teachers know students as individuals and deeply care about their well being. Guidance counselors and teachers work in tandem to produce civic minded young people through active participation in community service activities. Multiple clubs and tutoring opportunities also stimulate their interests and help to support their academic and personal growth. As a result students, the school has seen a significant decrease in safety incidences and an increase in the number of students graduating. Of the students that do graduate, 95% pursue higher education.
- The school uses student assessment results to calibrate curriculum and to modify instructional strategies at department and classroom levels in order to effect improvements in student achievement.
 - School leaders and teacher teams create and use assessments that mirror Regents examinations to gauge the effectiveness of the implementation of the curriculum and, in particular, the emphasis on literacy based activities. For example, in a global history examination students evaluate historical documents and write essays anchored on primary sources. As a result, school generated assessments provide information that supports the growth and achievement of learners towards standards based goals.
 - Teacher teams supplement summative data analysis by examining Periodic assessments and classroom data in order to identify strengths and areas of needs, track progress of student subgroups and make adjustments in curricular decisions. For example, English teachers use the editing and revision process to track and strengthen students writing skills. As a result, the school has been able to leverage greater success with English Language Learners, over age students, and those typically scoring in the lowest third on Regents examinations.
- Student achievement is monitored throughout the academic year at the classroom, department and schools levels.

- School leaders and faculty use periodic assessments to track progress towards goals and effectively monitor student performance in related areas. As a result, subject area teams are able to make effective adjustments to pacing calendars and curriculum maps with a clear focus on providing students with very effective support to improve learning.
- Teachers provide regular communication to students and families on student progress through weekly use of Teacher Ease, STARS report cards every six weeks, regular telephone calls and email communication. In addition, teachers and guidance counselors hold individual meetings with students to address specific issues resulting in improved student outcomes. Since this implementation, teachers have seen an increase in student achievement in English and mathematics assessments.
- The school has established structures for evaluating classroom teaching with an analysis of learning outcomes informing professional growth and reflection and resulting in greater coherence in instructional practices.
 - The school is working earnestly to provide professional development for teachers through network support, ASCD and consultants for new teachers. As a result, more strategic opportunities that promote differentiated support for new and experienced teachers to improve pedagogy and content knowledge are consistently offered. Subsequently, improvements in differentiated instruction and student engagement are evident in the classroom.
 - School leaders regularly conduct formal and informal classroom observations and provide timely post-observation recommendations to teachers to improve their practice. As the strategic recommendations made in observation reports are connected to student performance results, school leaders are able to make retention decisions based on the effective implementation of these recommendations.
- The schools has systems in place to monitor short and long term student progress which is accessible to all members of the school community and allows learning goals to be adjusted.
 - School leaders and teacher teams regularly customize and evaluate ATS attendance data, STARS teacher and subject area scholarship, OORS occurrences, I-Log guidance interventions, Teacher Ease entries and ARIS student progress reports from available systems. As a result, teachers measure interim goals and make necessary instructional adjustments, leading to a more effective level of coherence of policies and practices.
 - Teacher teams and individual teachers use an education plan model, where individual students subject area goals and action plan are listed, to regularly measure progress and provide actionable feedback to students resulting in more effective support to improve performance.

What the school needs to improve

- Design rigorous and coherent standards-based curricula across grades that emphasize key standards in order to support a diversity of learners.

- Curriculum maps and pacing calendars in all subject areas reflect New York State learning standards. However, curricula needs to be further customized to challenge and engage all learners. When questioned about their classes, ninth and tenth grade students stated that “teachers could make us work harder and assign more homework.” In turn, student work products in most classrooms do not demonstrate rigorous tasks that are cognitively demanding. As a result, improvements in student learning are hampered.
- Extend opportunities for all learners by differentiating instruction informed by performance data so that students are challenged to maximize learning.
 - Although teachers work individually and in subject area teams to develop lesson plans that are informed by data and address various learning styles, it is not yet evident in the delivery of lessons across the school. For example, in a geometry class groups of students were assigned by ability group as determined by past performance. However, in an integrated algebra class the teacher lead most of the discussion thus forgoing the opportunity for students to work in differentiated groups.
 - Across classrooms, active and varied teacher questioning resulted in a general level of student engagement. Therefore, there were missed opportunities for accountable-talk and group interaction that sustained high levels of engagement.
- Communicate high expectations to students and parents by engaging them in conversations around academic performance and behavior.
 - School leaders and faculty regularly communicate with students and families student academic performance, behavior and attendance. However, these communications do not provide students or parents the manner by which they can breach the specific areas of deficiencies; therefore students are not able to consistently meet expectations.
 - Multiple opportunities for parental involvement and leadership in school activities are not widely circulated and offered to parents who would like to have a greater voice in providing feedback to school leaders. This results in diminished levels of parent participation.
- Further develop the professional collaborations of teacher teams in order to adjust teacher practice with a focus on raising student performance.
 - Teacher teams are engaged in professional collaboration around examining student needs by using an inquiry approach. However, they have yet to delve into an in depth skills analysis in order to leverage a change of classroom practice towards closing the achievement gap.
 - Although teacher teams evaluate student work, the conversations are not consistently anchored in what classroom practices or curricula and pacing calendars need to be adjusted leading to sustainable improvement. Thus, instruction is not deeply impacted and student work does not always reflect academic rigor.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Q670 Robert F. Community High School	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