

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**John F. Kennedy Jr. High School**

**Q721**

**57-12 94<sup>th</sup> Street**

**Queens**

**NY 11373**

**Principal: Beth Rudolph**

**Dates of review: April 15-17, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Adrienne Edelstein**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

The John F. Kennedy Junior School is a high school with 432 students from 9<sup>th</sup> grade through grade 12. The school population comprises 28% Black, 38% Hispanic, 12% White, and 22% Asian students. The student body includes 41% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 65% of the students enrolled and girls account for 35%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 89%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is well developed.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school ensures curricula and tasks align to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and an array of work study courses promoting high levels of thinking and preparing students for college and career readiness. (1.1)
  - School leaders and teachers make purposeful decisions to align curricula to key standards assuring all students are prepared to demonstrate content acquisition and application of skills taught in all disciplinary areas and across the grades. The school uses the Unique Learning System, a CCLS aligned curricula for students with intellectual disabilities that provide project-based units of study. Mastery of Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals is evident in culminating projects from each thematic unit, such as the I-Movie from the “How does technology make a difference in our lives?” unit. Students research and document technology, including assistive technology and communication devices, that center around increasing access to employment and independent living through the use of technology. The main focus of the school’s vision is to ensure students are ready for the workforce and independent living. Using project-based learning and the Unique Learning Systems curricula, application of skills learned are applied at each student’s school or community based work site. Success of these programs is evidenced by, the 73 graduates this year, 96% of which are receiving supported employment services as compared to 83% of 67 graduates in the 2011-2012 school year.
  - Teacher teams meet twice weekly to critically analyze the degree of challenge embedded in projects, the impact of student performance at their worksite assignments, and to refine the curricula. For example, English language learners were experiencing difficulty in communicating at their community based work site. Bilingual and English as second language (ESL) teachers, collaboratively, used the “Trans-language Approach” to instruction to enable bilingual students to incorporate school practices into their own linguistic repertoire. This has resulted in 24 bilingual students of 47 eligible students, successfully placed in a work site assignment.
- Across classrooms instructional practices strategically support the school beliefs about student learning that result in high levels of student engagement and ensure increased student outcomes. (1.2)
  - Consistent practices support student learning, such as verbal encouragement, small group instruction, peer to peer interactions, and concrete supports, such as graphic organizers, were evident during classroom visits. All teachers apply the philosophy of “I do, we do, and you do” to all learning activities, and provide supports and scaffolds that ensure high levels of student engagement. In addition, professional development opportunities infuse the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) matrix approach into teachers’ questioning techniques, supporting a key element of the school’s chosen research based framework for teacher effectiveness. For example, in classes visited non-verbal students use

adaptive augmentative communication (AAC) devices as entry points in class discussions, peer to peer interaction and as a means to communicate their thinking. Paraprofessionals work with pre-identified student small groups on differentiated learning tasks, enabling access to the lesson for all students. These consistent practices support student learning leads to successful participation in the work study program. This is evident in the John F. Kennedy Junior Cafe, a school based work site, which is student managed. Job assignments include host, hostess, waiter, waitress, cashier and cook, supervised by a work study teacher.

- Across classrooms all students including relevant subgroups engage in discussions that reflect extended critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, and student ownership of the learning process. In classes visited, students working on the project-based technology unit worked in pairs, questioning each other on various concepts related to their project and giving an evaluative response to this class. Evidence of student ownership is seen in a “presentation competition” where a panel of graduates, parents and school leaders use a common rubric to judge the students presenting their finished projects. Students verbally or using an AAC device as an aid to enhance communication, explain the process, purpose and skills they acquired in completing this project, resulting in a technique of how students transfer these skills to their work study placements.
- Coherent assessment practices align to standards and curricula, support ongoing instructional adjustments that address specific learning needs of all students, leading to improvement of student performance. (2.2)
  - Teachers use a variety of assessments to monitor student growth, which include benchmark assessments from Unique, Students Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI), Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLLS) and teacher made assessments. The Data Specialist collects and records data from each class via a school-wide system that is reviewed by leadership, instructional team members and teachers. This enables the school to benchmark and track student progress and clear mastery of IEP goals. To ensure grading is transparent with a clear portrayal of student achievement, a school-wide grading policy is implemented allowing staff to look at student progress and plan next steps. Immediately following analyses of assessments, teachers use results to focus on areas in need of improvement. This is evidenced by the adjustments made to units of study in mathematics. Noting slow student growth in English language arts mastery, leadership realized a change in curricula was needed, and purchased and implemented the Equals mathematics program, which has resulted in an average progress gain of 183 points on the SANDI assessment.
  - Across classrooms students self-assess, and assess peers to understand their next steps and achieve their goals. Students are actively involved in establishing criteria to determine progress. This is evidenced by a, “self-assessment during the lesson” checklist, which students use to track their progress during each class. These assessments address the prompting level used and measure of independence for the specific task. At the end of each class exit slips given to students detail progress and outline next

steps. Where applicable, Picture Exchange Communication Symbols (PECS) are used to ensure all students have a clear understanding of their growth.

- Strategic use of resources and extensive partnerships ensures curricula access for all students and teachers effectively support instructional goals and ongoing student growth. (1.3)
  - Receiving a Resolution-A grant for \$450,000 allowed leadership to purchase SMART boards for all classrooms. Each teacher has an iPad, and professional development supports the use of technology to promote student engagement. This is evidenced in all classrooms, as teachers use SMART boards, and visuals to enable severely, cognitively delayed students to participate in lessons. In addition, creative use of the Resolution-A grant allows the school to participate in the district initiative “Mouse Squad” program, which after purchasing computer repair supplies, provides training for students on computer repair giving them foundational skills for employment. The school has an array of partnerships that help support individual needs of students, such as, several Chinese organizations, the Flushing Chinese Business Association (FCBA), New York Community Times and the office of councilmember, Peter Koo. These partnerships have resulted in a successful after-school Chinese New Year Celebration, and an increase in Chinese parent participation and resources to pilot a bilingual summer work study program. The Funds for Public Schools, and Caroline Kennedy funded \$10,000 to the school. Discussions with staff and family members led to a school decision to build a sensory room for students with the most challenging disabilities. Students engage in sensory integration activities, provided by physical and occupational therapists, in collaboration with classroom teachers, allowing students to partake in a distractible free environment. As a result of this, 7 students in small instructional settings are successfully participating in a school based work study program. In addition, the school via the Pencil organization is partnering with a vice president from Chase Manhattan Bank, which provides team building professional activities as evidenced by a 2.4% decrease in teacher absence, resulting in more consistent instructional time.
  - School leaders strategically schedule academy teams to meet twice weekly, using a common rubric to analyze student work and develop strategies implemented throughout the respective academy. Key staff members participate in formal team meetings at the main site, and return to their off-site work to share the learning within team meetings. This guarantees a uniform understanding of the school’s instructional goals, long range action plans, coherent instruction and social/emotional supports across the sites, as evidenced by 2% of English language learners moving from invalid to beginner on the continuum. In addition, the New York State Alternate Assessment shows that (NYSAA) of 82 students tested 91% scored level 4 in English language arts and 83% scored level 4 on the math test.

- Classroom observations coupled with continuous analysis of student work provide effective feedback and articulate clear expectations that supports professional growth resulting in improved instruction. (4.1)
  - A highly effective teacher observation process determines efficacy on the school's chosen competencies within the Danielson framework. The principal sets clear expectations and provides ongoing support for teacher practice, specifically connected to teacher goals designed from the competencies. Feedback clearly identifies strengths and challenges and provides actionable, targeted next steps to promote improvement. Observation documents identify teacher application of feedback in instructional practice. Administrators consistently review student work products and data related to IEP goal mastery, to correlate teacher practice to student performance. For example, a classroom teacher in need of improving practice showed strength in science instruction and was re-assigned to a science cluster position, demonstrating continued satisfactory performance on both informal and formal observations for the current school year. As a result of this process, teacher growth is improving and impacting on student outcomes as evidenced by an 11% increase in the number of students going to a Less Restrictive Environment (LRE) as compared to 7% in the 2011-2012 school year.
  - School leaders conduct formal observations, peer intervisitations, coaching, mentoring and collaborative meetings to support teacher development. Mid-year and end-of-year conversations provide opportunities for teachers and administrators to reflect ongoing practice, revise teacher goals and adjust instructional practices. Professional development focuses on increasing teacher understanding of the Danielson Framework to further improve practice. Lesson planning and preparation consistently noted low led to scheduling professional development on a weekly basis in this area and developing a suggested lesson plan template. Consequently, teachers exhibit an understanding of grade appropriate planning and support one another with implementation of new approaches, refining practices and taking on new initiatives, resulting in instructional changes that support student achievement.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Extend communication with families to include school expectations for learning and student ability levels, so that students and families understand student progress and supports needed toward those expectations. 3.4)
  - Families report that the school routinely advises them of school events, topics being studied, and progress towards meeting IEP goals. Monthly school newsletters provide informative articles and class information along with resources for parents. Progress reports related to meeting IEP goals are sent home every 6 weeks and at the end of each unit of study. However, parents requested more specific communication about their children's current ability levels in their core subjects, in order to determine what specific supports to provide for their children at home. The school does not yet provide this information, resulting in a limited partnership needed to allow parents, guidance and support staff to work together to prepare students for the next level.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: John F. Kennedy Jr. High School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score				X			
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?				X			
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?				X			
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?				X			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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 <b>inquiry approach</b> that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed