

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

The Kings Highway Academy

K197

**1599 East 22nd Street
Brooklyn
NY 11230**

Principal: Rosemarie Barbieri Nicoletti

Dates of review: November 12-13, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Rhonda Dawn Farkas

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Kings Highway Academy is a/an elementary school with 549 students from pre-k through grade 5. The school population comprises 18% Black, 18% Hispanic, 55% White, 7% Asian, and 2% other students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 95.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders ensure that academic tasks are organized and enhanced to cognitively engage all students and emphasize rigorous habits and performance tasks for all learners. (1.1)
 - School leaders collaborate with a Teachers College consultant who has helped the teachers plan and refine academic tasks using student artifacts to establish action plans, lesson plans, charts and tools for students to support the school's goal of emphasizing rigorous habits. Challenging independent thinking and rigorous engagement in higher order skills are fostered through tasks that require students reading texts of greater complexity, which supports the establishment of college and career readiness skills. In addition, this year, grade 5's writing unit was adjusted to include writing with a lens on history through research projects and the creation of research-based argument essays. In addition, the integration of social studies was evident in curricula units as students write informative or expository texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content, as evidenced in samples of their writing products. Specifically, in grade 5, the students conducted research projects using the *Westward Expansion* in which they used several sources to build knowledge through the investigation of different aspects of a topic, create a "write around," with specific information connected to the topic and choose visual images of the *Oregon Trail*. The revision of the curricula by teacher teams across subject areas has focused on the instructional shifts this year as well as last year, necessitated by the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and to support the learning of all students. This has resulted in improved student outcomes, as evidenced in the school's most recent Progress Report that denotes that the school earned 41.6 out of 60 points in student progress, thus, earning an "A" in English language arts (ELA) and math in this category.
- Students' social-emotional and academic growth is reflected in focused levels of support that results in a safe, inclusive and mutually respectful learning environment that influences their personal and scholastic development. (1.4)
 - The school values respectful relationships between students and adults; consequently student involvement is infused among all constituents of the school community. The leadership ensures structures are in place to coordinate academic, social-emotional, and attendance supports that positively impact scholastic and personal behaviors of all students. For example, the school engages the students in a *School Leaders* platform, during which time they meet once a week with the school's physical education teacher, who creates safe spaces for open discussion and has weekly check-ins that allow students to share their honest thoughts with one another in response to their research on the needs of the community. They also make decisions regarding pertinent social issues such as homelessness, hunger and community beautification. An example that illustrates how this program embraces student decision-making includes students convening to determine how to allocate Penny Harvest funds for

community service projects and donations to charitable organizations. In addition, they write “organization reflections,” which are then shared with the larger student body. Through this venue, students’ ideas, knowledge, opinions, and experiences are validated and acknowledged. Furthermore, the teacher leader of this program shares books, such as *Lady in the Box*, *City Green*, and *Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen* with teachers so that they can successfully embed social issues into the existing curricula. Moreover, the school has student guides, who assist lower grade classes with transitions to and from lunch. In these roles, student chaperones become mentors for the younger children and guide them toward greater independence, which is one of the school’s goals. Such participation in committees and leadership roles gives students a stake in their education, encourages responsibility in their personal lives, and leads the school’s efforts to support students to become effective problem solvers who are active citizens in their community. Both students and adults report that they feel their social needs are supported in a safe learning environment. According to the school’s Learning Environment Survey (LES), 97% indicated that they would recommend the school to other parents, 98% expressed that their child is headed in the right direction, and 95% of the parents reported that they feel their child is safe at the school. Likewise, one student reported that the school has fire drills and lockdowns and that “the teachers “teach lessons about ways to be safe.” This intentional focus on ensuring students’ social-emotional connections in a supportive learning environment has led to increased academic performance, improved personal growth skills, and has contributed to a 79% decrease in occurrences, according to data gathered from a three-year period analysis of incident and suspension reports.

- The school’s high expectations for student learning is communicated to staff and families which has led to increased academic learning, that is evidenced in students’ work samples aligned to college and career skills. (3.4)
 - To set and maintain clear expectations, school leaders identify a small number of core values, such as fostering student independence, and thread these values throughout all their efforts to build a strong school culture. One way these expectations are conveyed is through the morning launch in which announcements are made. The staff is reminded of their responsibilities to adhere to such items as timelines for the administration of baseline assessments for their students, so that they can provide appropriate instruction. The collection of artifacts for observations and initial planning goals in response to the domains in the Danielson teaching Framework, professional development sessions, and teacher meetings are areas where the school sets high expectations for the staff. In addition, school leaders publish administrative and parent handbooks, replete with the district and school mission statements, the school’s partnerships, grading criteria, language assistance services, parent-teacher conferences, dress and behavior codes, a reference list for the Chancellor’s Regulations, school closings, emergency storm procedures, and other pertinent information. School leaders also devote time during the school year to reinforce the expectations established to students. As a result, all school constituencies are reminded of the school’s values and they have internalized them, as evidenced by the parents, who stated that the school is working diligently to move students toward independence, in an effort to prepare them for college and career readiness. For example, parents receive intermittent progress reports

that reflect their children's' independent reading and writing levels, as well as guideposts for reading level expectations in successive months, and strategies their children need to work on to move along the trajectory on the reading and writing continuum, as well as grade-level expectations in math, guided by the CCLS. In addition, parents have attended workshops held at Columbia University to learn strategies to further enhance their children's attainment of literacy goals. Parents who attended these workshops stated that they "learned to be more patient, allow the child to take ownership, lessen the pressure, listen to the kids, and have them show and explain." In addition, the school's physical spaces such as classroom, hallways and offices are intentionally adorned with timely samples of student work, accompanied by rubrics that emphasize high expectations for students. These practices demonstrate the school's deep commitment to embracing home-school connections, building a comprehensive system for students and their families in a nurturing climate that engages learning inside and outside the school. As a result of building a culture of high expectations, all staff incorporates best practices aligned to the Danielson teaching framework and parents are provided with ongoing, periodic reports of their children's progress as well as opportunities to better understand the expectations of the CCLS for college and career readiness skills. Together, this has led to increased scholarship as evidenced in students' work samples and increased progress on the New York City Progress Report in ELA and math.

- School leaders' observation practices, provide feedback to teachers aligned to student data to support teachers' growth, inform professional development, and promote a school-wide culture of professional learning and reflection. (4.1)
 - School leaders incorporate the new Advance system, which outlines teacher effectiveness, in their ongoing evaluations of teachers. Low inference evidence collected through the observation process, informs their professional conversations and coaching for teachers by offering consistent, actionable feedback, identifying strengths and areas for improvement in teacher practice that are linked to student data for professional development. In addition, they tap the internal expertise among their colleagues and leverage outside expertise, such as a literacy consultant and network personnel to supplement their internal efforts to contribute to the school's efforts to strengthen and refine best teaching practices in order to increase student learning and ensure effective teaching across the school that results in improved student outcomes. The principal and assistant principal systemically track trends in teachers' observations, identify teachers on the trajectory of effectiveness and provide specific feedback using low inference comments, which informs the school's professional development plan. Furthermore, the principal purchased 20 calendar days for professional development at Teachers College, which are attended by the school leaders and classroom teachers to further promote best instructional practices. Teachers who participate in Teachers College staff development are expected to turnkey to their colleagues to assist with improving practices across classrooms. Administrators use their analyses of classroom observation outcomes to make recommendations to staff around professional development in the areas of need, as well as to provide teachers opportunities to self-select based on their interests. Examples of some of the workshops include small group instruction, vocabulary acquisition, strategies and support for building independence for Students with disabilities (SWDs), and

strategies for English language learners (ELLs), along with the principles of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The school also uses exemplar classrooms as labsites during which focused, collegial visits to classrooms, followed by debriefing sessions, results in teachers using a shared schoolwide lens for identifying best practices that are devoted to the attainment of school-wide instructional goals and raising student achievement. Such structures demonstrate the administration's intentional focus on building sources of support to facilitate and intensify the school's professional development to improve instructional capacity within the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen and refine teaching practices and academic tasks aligned to entry points that extend student thinking and participation in order to improve cognitive capacity and close the achievement gap for all learners. (1.2)
 - The workshop model, guided by Teachers College units of study, is an embedded teaching practice across all classrooms. In some classrooms, teachers provide differentiated supports and approaches to help meet students at their respective points of entry. For example, in one classroom, after having students self-assess their learning, using a rubric for informational writing, students worked independently on their writing while, simultaneously, the teacher conducted a strategy lesson with a small group. The composition of the small group was based on data culled from the students' drafts, in which they were learning how to use "hooks", such as adding a picture, writing a question, starting with a quote, or using bold or capitals to engage their reader. In addition, she had an English language learner working on an I-Pad using *Google Translate* and using *Words their Way*, a translation program for vocabulary acquisition. In another class, the teacher used a SMARTboard, replete with graphics, for an introductory lesson on revising nonfiction writing. The teacher encouraged the students to answer three questions in response to the teacher's modeling: *Do I have a chapter heading on each page? Did I use your fancy expert words? Do all of my sentences teach?* Students had to give reasons to support their responses. Following this, the students were given a revision checklist and were encouraged to look closely to determine whether they needed to make adjustments. They were then encouraged to exchange their lists with their partners to engage in the revising process. However, in the majority of classrooms visited, teachers' questions led students though a single path of inquiry for the whole class, without addressing various instructional entry levels. Furthermore, interaction among students that promotes high levels of active engagement and provides multiple points of entry to ensure students' access to curricula was uneven. Thus, limited opportunities to boost collaborative thinking and encourage insightful thinking, questioning, and discussion among all students, such as ELLs, SWDs, and high achievers, do not consistently support the development of cognitive capacity for all learners, in order to close the achievement gap.

- Promote greater reliability in the alignment of teachers' ongoing checks for understanding to consistently measure student mastery toward goal attainment and adjust curricula and instruction to accelerate learning for all students. (2.2)
 - Teams and individual teachers monitor student work products and maintain a plethora of data from common grade-wide unit assessments and classroom conference notes to determine student progress toward goals. However, the practice of using the results gathered from these data sources to make immediate effective adjustments to instruction is not coherent across curricula. In addition, although the majority of teachers engage students in feedback loops of understanding through conferencing during the independent work period, teacher feedback comments on student work displayed on bulletin boards, in student notebooks and work folders are uneven across classrooms. For example, some teachers provide editing checklists for self- and peer editing, whereby students provide compliments and suggestions to their classmates. However, other teachers merely circle the sections on the rubric without providing explicit and actionable improvement feedback that includes what strategies might lead to the progression of student work to augment their grade. Hence, there are missed opportunities for all students to receive actionable feedback to enhance work towards attaining their goals.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

| School name: The Kings Highway Academy | UD | D | P | WD | | | |
|---|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Overall QR Score | | | X | | | | |
| Instructional Core | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i> | UD | D | P | WD | | | |
| 1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards? | | | X | | | | |
| 1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the 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 | | | | | |
| School Culture | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent does the school ...</i> | UD | D | P | WD | | | |
| 1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports 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 those expectations? | | | | X | | | |
| Systems for Improvement | | | | | | | |
| <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 student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection? | | | 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 | | | | |
| 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 | | | | |
| Quality Review Scoring Key | | | | | | | |
| UD | Underdeveloped | D | Developing | P | Proficient | WD | Well Developed |