



**Department of
Education**

Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning
2013-2014

Quality Review Report

2013-2014

KAPPA V

**Middle School K518
985 Rockaway Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Thomas Mullin

**Dates of review: May 13-14, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Mauricière de Govia**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

KAPPA V is a middle school with 229 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 92% Black, 7% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 93.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty have refined the curricula to align with key standards, the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE), and rigorous tasks promoting high level thinking across grades and subjects. (1.1)
 - The principal, in collaboration with the faculty, adopted Scholastic's Code X curriculum for English language arts and the Connected Mathematics Project (CMP3) curriculum for math instruction. Both the principal and teachers echoed similar sentiments about the programs stating that, "both programs offered focus on the instructional shifts and vocabulary building...a school-wide focus." Furthermore they possess "rigor" as defined by the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) wheel and allow for differentiated engagement that encourages students to explore the curriculum via multiple entry points for all learners, including special education students and English language learners. Teachers began planning the curriculum in the summer and were granted flexibility of pacing and planning from the principal who expressed that he wanted, "to ensure multiple entry points into the curriculum for all students...teachers need time to work with their colleagues to determine how the lessons will benefit students." The principal's goal of having students engage in a curriculum that "forces kids to think" was reinforced by curriculum plans that showed evidence of the instructional shifts highlighted by units and Depth of Knowledge leveling of specified questions. For example, in an 8th grade English language arts curriculum map, questions such as "How is setting described in the book excerpt?" and "What challenges do the setting present to Pi?" were anchored by the larger essential question "What inspires the will to survive?" In curriculum maps there was also differentiation of tasks and assessments supported by rubrics, flexible grouping of students, reading and writing skills that need to be "unpacked" before engaging in specified units of study, and direct alignment between the teaching point and the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Other supplements to the curriculum include novels that connect to Codex's unit of study that foster student engagement with complex text. In a 7th grade English language arts curriculum map the teacher supplemented an excerpt and poem in conjunction with an external novel to teach the unit "Mapping your Life". To foster more independent study and build more mathematical fluency, teachers supplemented the math program with workbooks, targeted performance tasks, and drills to enhance students' performance. Lastly, the integration of technology and the arts into math and English language arts created seamless pathways between subject areas. For example, the art teacher's lesson plan showed evidence of working with the math team to develop the lesson on the connections between pop art and tessellation. Questions such as "What polygon is repeated?" and "What is the color pattern in the picture?" elicited math vocabulary from the students - a priority cited by the principal. As a result of this curricula selections and design, all students, including English language learners and special

education students, have access to CCLS-aligned curricula that infuse the instructional shifts to engage students in higher order thinking across grades and subjects.

- Teachers' instructional practices provide learners with multiple entry points into the curricula so that all students can demonstrate high level of thinking and meaningful work products. (1.2)
 - The principal stated that students learn best via "...a curriculum that forces them to think...kids need time to work on their own and figure out challenging problems...eventually they become quicker on their feet and smarter thinkers." The principal's sentiment was evident in classrooms as students were in differentiated groups and pairs with differentiated tasks and graphic organizers to engage them in lessons. In a 7th grade math class, students worked in pairs to answer the focus question of "How can I use mathematical reasoning to determine whether or not the information given describes a possible triangle?" The teacher stated the expectation for the students was that, "one person is constructing the triangles and the other person is questioning how their partner is solving it." One student pair said, "What type of triangle do you think it would be?" The partner replied, "A right angle." The student then asked "How many degrees would the angle AC have to be to make it isosceles?" In an 8th grade history class, students were asked to compare and contrast two writers' perspectives on democracy by analyzing the strategies they use to convey their perspectives. In this class, students used graphic organizers to organize their thoughts on democracy and plan an informative essay. As the students worked the teacher conducted conferences and asked the students questions such as "How does that line in the poem support the writer's perspective?" and, "Do you have other evidence to support what you think the writer thinks about democracy?" As a result of these pedagogical practices, all learners, including English language learners and special education students, are provided with multiple entry points into the curriculum that fosters the demonstration of higher order questioning, discussion, and engaging in challenging tasks that are aligned to learners' needs.
- Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices measure student progress through the use of rubrics, conferences, and common assessments to adjust instruction and lead to increased achievement. (2.2)
 - The school leader has a comprehensive understanding of the value and use of assessment data to influence and drive instruction school-wide. All students, including English language learners and special education students, are given formative and summative assessments that assess skills, standards acquisition, and content knowledge that are acquired before, during, and following units of study. Both school leaders and teachers demonstrated that they are tracking and making adjustments to curricula, lesson plans, student groups, and tasks based on student performance data acquired from Measures of Student Learning, state tests, the Middle School Quality Initiative, and reading and math assessments. Furthermore, embedded in their curriculum are assessments of students' performance. For example, Codex provides unit tests and performance tasks to determine student comprehension and progress. The principal provides teachers with a checklist to assess

student growth on specific skills identified for improvement. In classrooms, teachers were seen conferring with students using the checklist and checking for understanding via questioning and the expectation for students to explain their work. During meetings, the principal and the teachers referred to spreadsheets that track student performance with standards and skills that have been achieved by students. Furthermore, teachers were witnessed referring to student data and then aligning it to next steps in lesson planning. Teachers shared exit tickets, reflection sheets, rubrics attached to student work, and benchmark data to determine next instructional steps. For example, it was through the review of data that the teacher teams recognized the need to change the way in which they delivered vocabulary instruction across the grades. Data revealed that teachers needed to front load vocabulary, providing greater context for understanding and scaffolds for application of new vocabulary words. The same is true for the teaching of reading skills where the teachers decided that certain skills, like visualization and inferring, needed to be explicitly taught before engaging the students in specified units of study. As a result of these assessment structures, data reviews are connected to instructional expectations that influence school-wide as well as classroom practice. Teachers continuously review assessments to determine instructional next steps for and with students. This collaborative effort ensures the development of a targeted curriculum that is differentiated to the needs of all learners in the classroom.

- Teachers engage in professional collaborations building their capacity in curriculum development, analyzing student work, and the integration of the CCLS, resulting in improved student learning. (4.2)
 - Teacher teamwork occurs several times throughout the week. Teachers meet for grade, content, faculty, and professional development meetings. The principal is a firm believer in his teachers receiving time to commune and reflect with each other regarding their pedagogical practice. He stated, “adult learning is a collaborative effort...teaming teachers provides the most optimal opportunity for teachers to learn from one another and norm expected practices.” The principal is an active participant in teacher teams. There is an expectation that set agendas and minutes memorialize the teachers’ processes and discussions. A review of these items revealed meetings that facilitated instructional walk throughs, reviews of student work, and curriculum planning to facilitate the incorporation of the instructional shifts. During the math teacher team meeting, teachers reviewed potential curriculum materials for the next school year. Teachers conversed about the format of the text, the student accessibility to the content presented, the planning material provided, and the ability to incorporate and bridge new supplemental materials into the program they created this school year. During this meeting the teachers also reviewed student work that focused on the concept of mean absolute deviation, reviewing three different students’ work against the rubric provided. The presenting teacher listened and questioned as her colleagues discussed sequential teaching, modifications to the homework, frontloading skills and determining differentiation of problem based on student capacity. In the English language arts meeting the teachers discussed the need to reinforce the college and career readiness aspect of their curriculum via college tours, research assignments, and supplemental curricula such as novels that

are challenging but accessible to their students. They also discussed enhancing the social-emotional component of the morning tutorials, which provide a small teacher-to-student ratio based on academic need and performance. The teachers felt that it was also a prime opportunity to build relationships with students that could provide “pulse checks” for how students feel or determine potential “hot spots” for issues throughout the day. As a result of these teacher team practices, teachers engage in structured professional collaborations analyzing student work, making connections between assessments and curriculum and determining progress for all learners, thereby strengthening the instructional capacity of all the teachers.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen structures and processes that enhance a theory of action for school goals that are tracked and thoughtfully adjusted to leverage change that is aligned to student learning and social-emotional growth. (3.1)
 - The principal shared specific goals that were determined in collaboration with the faculty, School Leadership Team, and parents. Data such as the Progress Reports and student performance tasks revealed the need to improve opportunities in math, sustain and grow instruction in English language arts, focusing on the delivery and retention of vocabulary, and teacher acquisition and understanding of the Danielson Framework. The Comprehensive Education Plan captures these goals along with clear action plans that have been implemented via teacher teams, assessment checklists, and student work products. While the school has developed focused school-level goals that are based on data and assessed needs, there is little to no evidence that these goals are being tracked for progress, and modified to students’ learning needs. Teachers do have access to data and are aware of the school-wide goals that are informed by the needs of the students. However, there is no defined way to identify the academic progress of the students and the adult learning achieve by the teachers as a result of professional development. As a result of these missing elements, the school has limited to no opportunities for tracking, monitoring, or revising goals throughout the school year, thereby limiting efforts to accelerate student learning and foster social emotional growth.
- Refine the observation process to develop a strategic, transparent system for aligning professional development to teacher feedback that elevates instructional practices. (4.1)
 - The principal stated, “Danielson was a big challenge for us this year...we focused on building teacher understanding, where to find information, and what the criteria looked like in the classroom.” Teachers echoed his sentiment as they discussed having the rubric along with a deep dive on Domain 3 taught to them in multiple professional development sessions. They also shared that they watched videos on ARIS to attain a better understanding of the new expectations. A review of the observation feedback cites areas for growth such as higher-order questioning, student engagement, and the development of lesson plans as specified by 1B on the Danielson rubric to meet the instructional needs of students. The administrators’ feedback to teachers is evidence-based,

but does not provide actionable next steps that can support teachers through a professional development structure or plan that is differentiated and assessed for growth. There is an observation calendar that includes the dates, the observer, the teacher and a section to check for completion, but it does not account for how observations, feedback, and professional development are aligned to improve instructional practices in the classroom. The lack of those connections compromises differentiated support for areas of growth for teacher practice. For example, teachers were told what they needed to improve such as “ask higher level questions as it relates to 3B”, but they were not guided as to how this would be accomplished. Furthermore, the navigation the Danielson rubric from ineffective to highly effective needed greater clarification as teachers’ understanding varied. These practices have led to teacher professional development that is not differentiated or targeted to individual adult learning needs, resulting in a singular and, thus, less effective approach to ensuring what teachers needs to support student mastery of the Common Core Learning Standards and incorporating the instructional shifts into lesson planning and execution.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: KAPPA V	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