

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis**

**High School 529**

**20 West 46<sup>th</sup> Street,  
Manhattan,  
NY 10036**

**Principal: Edward DeMeo**

**Dates of review: January 14 - 15, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich**

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

### **Information about the school**

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis is a high school with 709 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 23% Black, 70% Hispanic, 3% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 77.4%

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The administration makes effective organizational decisions to create supports aligned to the school's instructional goals in order to improve staff and student performance. (1.3)
  - Ninth graders are enrolled in either a double period of Ramp Up English class or a writing class in addition to English language arts, and in a double-block of math, in order to target students' learning needs. To ensure reduced class size and model best practices, the principal and assistant principals each teach a class. In addition, the principal budgeted a multi-year technology plan resulting in the purchase of four SMARTboards that allow all teachers to use interactive technology supporting the school goal of engaging all students in technology based learning experiences. Concurrently the school purchased two laptop carts, which teachers of English language learner classes use regularly to maximize student engagement. By incorporating interactive technology, teachers across content areas and grades are able to implement engaging lessons with real world connections for all students.
  - Teachers have a weekly common planning period for team meetings on Wednesday, due to a school-based option for an early dismissal of students. During this weekly meeting, teachers collaborate on increasing instructional practices and engage in cross-curricular planning to improve instruction and create engaging and challenging academic tasks. With an influx of new teachers, the principal made a strategic determination to create subject area teacher-leaders, to support the implementation of school wide goals. Additionally, the principal structured teacher leaders' schedules to meet with administration weekly, to plan for whole team Wednesday meetings, and teachers stated that they also meet with colleagues who teach the same subject, resulting in a sense of strong collegiality and collective responsibility for the attainment of the school's instructional goals.
- The school has developed an inclusive and nurturing environment, characterized by a variety of support systems that contribute positively to the academic and social emotional development of all students. (1.4)
  - Each teacher knows individual students well through the portfolio system employed. At least three times a semester, teachers meet with each student to discuss and review their progress toward college-career readiness goals based on student self-selected work with written reflections in portfolios. Parents shared that they are very pleased with teachers' responsiveness via email, mail or phone, in the home language regarding student achievement, college-career readiness, attendance, and social-emotional needs. Students in the school's National Honor Society and student government meet weekly with administration and teacher leaders to voice student concerns and ideas. A student, who has tried twice and succeeded once in starting clubs, recounted, "The principal allows kids to start their own clubs if they can get the required number of student signatures and a staff advisor." Students spoke highly of the principal's respect for student voice and responsibility. Staff from

the school's partner, Inwood House, housed with the school counselors, provides peer training and counseling, teen choice groups, and parent workshops, to name a few of the multiple supports for students' social emotional needs. Students stated that they are able to make a lunch appointment with a peer counselor to discuss an issue, which is better handled by someone their own age. In addition to self-referral, the guidance counselors and teachers refer students to Inwood House for increased social emotional learning support. The school's attendance committee, including Inwood House, established a controlled system to monitor punctuality and ensure accurate reporting of attendance. The attendance committee supports the school's goals by providing targeted guidance, counseling and academic services. This allows more time for guidance counselors to support students in academic planning that provides for transitioning from high school to college and career. As a result, students benefit from positive structures that target attendance, social-emotional learning, and guidance, and as evidenced by the School Survey Results the school has increased its score for academic expectations rate from 7.5 in 2012 to 8.0 in 2013 and for Safety and Respect from 7.6 in 2012 to 8.0 in 2013.

- The school communicates high expectations for staff, students, and their families, and offers varied support structures to ensure success in meeting expectations. (3.4 )
  - The school thrives on communicating a vision of high expectations to all constituents in order to improve student achievement. Each school's department has goal statements, emphasizing a shared understanding of the need to support students to succeed, as well as outlining the school's consistent use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching which is used for evaluation of teacher performance and explicitly delineates common high expectations linked to instruction. To that end, multiple professional development opportunities from the Network for teachers and administrators provide needed learning opportunities. Timely pre- and post-observation conferences support ongoing communication of expectations, build strong relationships between teachers and administrator, and administrators have created a system for accountability for expectations. As a result, teachers state they are pleased with the system and find it is supportive to their professional growth. Additionally, the principal articulates high expectations to the whole school community via systems including weekly leadership team meetings, a semester newsletter, bulletins, individual and team discussions, a school handbook distributed to all members of the school community, assemblies with students, and the school's online communication and grading system, Skedula, which all teachers, families and students are able to access daily. The leadership team communicates expectations school wide through Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), a college readiness system that is designed to increase school wide learning and performance. All teachers are trained by the AVID coordinator/teacher, who not only provides training on strategies but also teaches two sections of AVID classes. All teachers use the portfolio system and confer with students regarding expectations for their progress toward college and career-ready goals. Students indicate that teachers meet with them individually to discuss goals and progress and that feedback on student work provides guidance and advisement supports that prepare students for the next level. Additionally, the school's college office provides widely

attended parent/student workshops on such topics as financial aid, finding a college, and the college application process, and facilitates support for students taking the Pre-Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), thus promoting awareness for high expectations and college readiness. Parents state “The communication is strong”, noting the monthly newsletters that provide reminders of crucial deadlines relevant to the college application process. This cultivation of high expectations and strong communication between the school and families has led to substantial increases in the area of academic expectations and communications on the most recent school survey.

## What the school needs to improve

- Deepen curricula development across content areas and grades to consistently incorporate tasks that emphasize higher-order thinking skills so that all learners are cognitively engaged. (1.1 )
  - A review of curriculum artifacts shows an emphasis on reading and comprehending informational text, citing evidence from text as a basis for verbal answers and written responses, and the use of academic vocabulary in student work. There is a strong focus on college and career readiness skills in all grades, with many units emphasizing tasks that require students to read and cite evidence from texts to support ideas and arguments, develop writing skills, annotate work across levels, offer explanations of inferences drawn from the text, and create objective summaries from Cornell notes after reading. However, although the school defines “RIGOR” as “Responsible and caring adults, Instructing and Guiding students to Organize projects in college and career readiness via Real world experiences”, this theory is not yet evidenced sufficiently in tasks across grades and subjects, especially in classes with English language learners and students with disabilities. As a result, all students are neither consistently challenged, nor engaged deeply and interactively in higher-order thinking and learning activities.
  - A review of curriculum artifacts reveals a focus on reading and comprehending informational text, citing evidence from text as a basis for verbal answers and written responses, and the use of academic vocabulary in student work. Despite this thoughtful process, lessons within units of study inconsistently include multiple entry points and an emphasis on higher-order thinking skills. Some curriculum does provide opportunities for academic tasks that emphasize higher-order thinking skills. For example, an English assignment required students to identify citations in both a non-fiction article on Bosnian student star-crossed lovers and *Romeo and Juliet*, while supporting their claims. In an Integrated Algebra assignment, a short video on the use of parabolas in basketball included a real world implementation by providing a multiple-entry point for students of different abilities. However in several instances this was different. In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) history assignment, although a short video on the Homestead Strike provided the background and an entry point for students, a reading of two primary nonfiction sources followed this. The lesson plan provided all students with the same 'modified' document to annotate and there was no evidence of leveled reading provided to appropriate students nor was there evidence of scaffolds for annotating or note taking. Consequently, there is inconsistent evidence in the written curriculum indicating that

teachers are expected to implement strategies to provide multiple entry points and access for diverse learners as defined by Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, limiting progress and acceleration of learning for many students.

- Strengthen teacher pedagogy to ensure instruction that consistently utilizes effective questioning, multiple entry points, and rigorous tasks, to elevate thinking and the quality of work products by all learners. (1.2 )
  - The school's major pedagogical foci are questioning and discussion. Although the staff has received professional development in this area, across classrooms questions are mostly lower level and lessons do not always challenge and push the thinking of all students. For example, in an Algebra class the focus was on procedural fluency that led to minimal discussion or use of content area vocabulary by students. Additionally, during class visitations there was an inconsistent use of multiple entry points including adequate scaffolds, interactive activities and adaptations to learning resources to challenge and support the thinking of high needs students, including students with disabilities and English language learners. In several classes, scaffolds such as highlighting, sentence starters, and graphic organizers were employed. Plus in a few classes there were interactive activities, with students working in predetermined groups. Yet, in some classrooms, although students were assigned to work in groups, students worked silently and independently on the assigned group tasks. As a result, some students are not engaged in learning activities or discussions that foster higher levels of thinking that maximize their learning and this limits the range of learning opportunities enabling students to work to their full potential to generate high quality work products as defined by the demands of the CCLS.
  - Teachers plan lessons, often collaboratively, providing some opportunities for differentiation in class. During classroom visits, although teachers ask multiple questions, the implementation of questioning was consistently teacher-to-student and student-to-teacher, without rich student-to-student discussion or accountable talk employed, reflecting uneven levels of student thinking and participation. In several classes the level of questioning did not universally lead to high levels of student thinking. Yet in a few classes students were encouraged to explain the rationale for their responses, such as in one lesson where students were asked, "Who is the most responsible for the Holocaust? Support your argument in a paragraph including one counterclaim." In several classrooms though, basic comprehension questions did not give students the opportunity to expand on their understanding of concepts, limiting the level of discussion, and, most classrooms did not allow student-to-student discussion of the context for assigned tasks, thus limiting student thinking and participation in higher-order learning. As a result not all students are challenged to meet levels of thinking required by the Common Core Learning Standards.
- Refine assessment practices to consistently use data from on-going checks for understanding to inform adjustments to curricula and instruction leading to positive impact on student progress. (2.2 )

- Currently, the school developed common assessments for interim benchmarks. Upon receiving the results from these assessments, the administration analyzes the data and delivers it to the lead teachers who in turn share it with their department. The department then determines the adjustments to curricula and instruction. Administrators provide teachers with summative data on student performance by grade and class. However, the use of grade level data that includes benchmarks to more accurately monitor student performance is just beginning, limiting teachers' ability to accelerate student progress. Teacher teams meet frequently to discuss units of study, look at student work, and develop common rubrics and assessments aligned to the curriculum. Discussions often include teachers' noticings of strengths and needs within their own classrooms. Yet, this information does not lead to focused decisions about implementation or monitoring of specific instructional strategies to improve student learning based on identified skills gaps. As a result there are missed opportunities to develop timely, instructional adjustments or solutions and implement them over time to ensure that student learning is maximized across contents and grades.
- Teachers make use of proven practices as levers in checking for understanding, and authentic student work enables students to reflect on their achievement and progress toward personal goals aligned to school wide goals. "Exit slips" or "exit tickets" are commonplace strategies that drive instruction on an ongoing basis, thus providing regular checks for understanding to measure student learning. Yet, data gathered through these daily assessment practices is infrequently used to adjust instruction. While most teachers check for understanding at the close of a lesson, in classroom visitations, numerous teachers did not engage in on the spot lesson adjustments to support student comprehension. As a result there are missed opportunities to develop timely, instructional adjustments or solutions to ensure student learning is maximized.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis 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 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					
<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 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				
<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 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					
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>