

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Alfred J. Kennedy

Q193

**152-20 11 AVENUE
QUEENS
NY, 11357**

Principal: Joyce E. Bush

**Dates of review: Feb 27-28, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Danielle DiMango**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Alfred J. Kennedy is an elementary school with 500 students from Pre-k through grade 5. The school population comprises .8% Black, 18% Hispanic, 58% White, and 23% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 95.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's thoughtful school organization and effective use of resources and community partnerships support instructional goals and the learning needs of students. (1.3)
 - In order to better support college and career readiness skills and twenty first century learning, the principal received grant funding and budgeted school funds to purchase SMART boards, iPads, a mobile science lab and online programs such as Study Island for home/school supports. In addition, the school purchased Raz Kids to offer e-books to all students and Imagine Learning to provide further access to oral language skills, academic vocabulary and key components of reading to English language learners and special education students. Additionally, the school has formed strong partnerships with City Center, Empire State partnership grants and Encores! to further incorporate the arts into the school curriculum. These tools and partnerships have led to high levels of engagement in student learning, provide teachers with immediate data used to better align instruction to the needs of students and has been effective in increasing student outcomes as evidenced from analysis of progress reports from school wide assessment tools such as Think Central that reveal status of class and individual student progression aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards.
 - The principal's commitment to personalized supports for all learners is evident in the innovative school program she has maintained year after year as part of her planning. Each year the principal schedules one period each day to allow teachers to provide targeted instruction through reduced class size. This time includes interventions such as vocabulary and reading comprehension guided groups for struggling students as well as activities for advanced learners such as logic games within curricular units of study. Additionally, once a week, full complements of enrichment clusters are scheduled during the school day and students have opportunities to select classes through a school survey entitled "If I ran the school, I would choose to learn these five things!" Enrichment choices are categorized by content area and include: Basketball, Stock Market Game, Cultural Dance, Newspaper, Paleontology, Theatre, Book Making, Chess, Painting, Fitness and Sports. These opportunities allow for teachers to implement targeted and meaningful instructional supplements resulting in improved student outcomes as evidenced in an increase in student progress in both English language arts and math on the 2012-2013 school progress report.
- The school maintains a collaborative and supportive learning environment where students' academic and social/emotional needs are met fostering a culture where learning is a priority. (1.4)
 - Each year the school conducts an online trust survey where students select two staff members they feel they can trust and talk to. Survey results are compiled and disseminated to staff members who develop mentorships with students. In every classroom, students establish features of a 'Caring Being' person. For instance kindness, generous, or helpful qualities. Good character traits are reinforced during weekly

lessons around words of the week reflecting on positive vocabulary to facilitate discussions in the classroom. This work is aligned to Book of the Month themes. Students in grades 4 and 5 work as peer mediators with support of the guidance counselor to foster positive decision-making and communication among peers. Additionally, positive personal behaviors are fostered through the use of an on line behavior/reward management system that also provides parents with access to the classroom behaviors of their child for school/home connections. As a result of these practices, there has been an increase of positive behaviors throughout the school, and students say they feel connected to their school community and responsible for maintaining a positive learning culture allowing them to focus on their school work.

- Across all classrooms, teachers use assessment practices and consistent checks for understanding to promote student reflection and provide feedback regarding achievement and curricula and instructional choices. (2.2)
 - Based on evidence culled from Teachboost regarding teacher ratings within the Danielson framework, the school wide instructional focus centers on ensuring assessment practices effectively measure student learning, offer detailed information for teachers to effectively plan with in order to move students towards mastery of the standards and to provide students with clear feedback around next learning steps. To that end, teachers have created rubrics and checklists aligned to key standards addressed within each task and unit of study. These tools include lesson assessment checklists and class profile sheets used by teachers, as well as student monitoring checklists and rubrics as supports during classroom instruction, independent work time or for teachers to organize small group instruction. These consistent and supportive tools also provide opportunities for students to explain their thinking and for teachers to provide ongoing feedback to students. As a result, teachers and students are sharing a common language regarding student progress and teachers are able to provide appropriate supports throughout the learning process, deepening student understanding of their areas of focus along the way resulting in improved outcomes for all learners.
 - As part of their work around alignment of curricula, teachers are using pre and post assessments built into the Go Math and Ready Gen programs as well as performance tasks, Fountas and Pinnell levels and the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) to monitor class, grade and school wide progress. Additionally teacher created assessments and other online tools provide supplementary data aligned directly to the Common Core Learning Standards. For example, this year the school is using an online data tracking system, Think Central, to assess class and individual student progress in math. During teacher team meetings, this data is analyzed and used to monitor and revise instruction and plan for interventions, extensions and flexible student groups. As a result of this consistent monitoring of student learning, teachers are setting specific grade goals and making appropriate adjustments to curriculum and instruction to include a deeper emphasis on the instructional shifts. Analysis of these assessments is revealing growth in specific areas of focus such as mathematical problem solving and application of concepts as well as improved comprehension and reasoning skills in non-fiction text.

- A thoughtful observation process, feedback and professional learning activities are aligned to and support professional growth and reflection throughout the school. (4.1)
 - The principal and assistant principal have successfully calibrated their understanding of the expectations of the Danielson framework through analysis of school rating reports, as well as network rating trends. When teacher practice improves, feedback highlights specific actions implemented by the teacher during the lesson that demonstrates growth. For example evaluator's notes highlighted a teacher moving from effective to highly effective in building classroom environments that support learning because of specific strategies implemented by the teacher that supported an environment through strategies such as sentence prompts and clearly designed questions that led to deeper student discussions. Additionally, feedback to all teachers includes key elements of each domain of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and suggested practices that would improve teacher practice. Finally, all feedback includes learning opportunities through teaching videos related to specific professional needs and exemplify expectations within a particular domain. These feedback systems have created a culture of teacher ownership and responsibility of their learning and they can articulate the broader purpose of how the feedback they receive enriches and strengthens their pedagogy.
 - The administration has established clear structures that successfully align the needs of teachers to targeted professional development and their individual goals. During one on one meetings, teachers, in collaboration with administration develop goals within specific domains of the Danielson Framework. These goals are then prioritized school wide and a professional development calendar is created where teachers have options to choose from a menu of offerings. In support of collaboration and thinking about improving effectiveness, the school's learning culture expectations are used by teachers to write reflections about how the professional development they engaged in has further supported their practice. Additionally, through the use of Teachboost, the principal is able to capture and analyze instructional trends and use both data streams to design more concentrated training. As a result of this school wide focus of supporting teacher growth using common language and focused learning opportunities, teachers have implemented instructional practices such as increased partnerships and group work and the principal is using observation data to inform lead teachers and collaborative team roles on each grade level.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand upon the work of curricula alignment and design to include a deeper focus on writing process skills and ensure tasks in all content areas emphasize rigorous habits to extend student thinking and maximize learning. (1.1)
 - Teacher teams have worked closely with school leaders and network support staff to plan and refine curriculum and tasks within the CCLS aligned Ready Gen and Go Math programs. Curricular format in all content areas includes essential questions and, "I Can" statements that embed key standards and scaffolds within and across grades and include the instructional shifts, such as using text based answers to support thinking, consistent academic vocabulary and coherence and deep understanding of math concepts. However, at this time, focus on

writing standards, skills and strategies at school and teacher team levels and embedded higher order skills have not been as comprehensive as the curricula work in other content areas. As a result, the school is still in the process of making decisions in this content area to build coherence in the alignment of instructional shifts to further challenge student thinking and engagement in their learning.

- Ensure classroom instruction and learning activities provide appropriate levels of challenge for students and align to instructional outcomes to maximize higher order thinking, student engagement and ownership of learning. (1.2)
 - Across classrooms, teachers have designed and implemented consistent teaching practices and multiple entry points, such as, opportunities for student discussions, use of graphic organizers, think -tack -toe boards, vocabulary scaffolds, sentence prompts for discussion and writing starters, “I Can” statements in daily lesson targets. Furthermore, the use of the Concrete, Representational, Abstract and Written (CRAW) strategy requires students to represent their math thinking in multiple ways. However, at this time, some teachers do not strategically align instruction strategies to meet advanced learners readiness and achievement levels. For example, although there was clear evidence that teachers are carefully planning to address the needs of struggling learners using strategies such as parallel teaching and use of story grammar markers to help students visualize the elements within a story, other tasks designed in the same classrooms for higher achievers did not push levels of student thinking or support high levels of student discourse limiting their ability to achieve at their fullest potential and take ownership of their learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Alfred J. Kennedy	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