

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Banana Kelly High School**

**08X530**

**965 LONGWOOD AVENUE  
BRONX NY, 10459**

**Principal: Charlette Pope**

**Dates of Review: December 11-12, 2013  
Lead Reviewer: Carron Staple**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Banana Kelly High School is a high school with 423 students from grades 9 through 12. The school population comprises 35% Black, and 65% Hispanic. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 26% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 72.9%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Curricula are aligned with State standards and reflect a robust effort to integrate Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and tasks promoting higher order thinking skills and postsecondary readiness. (1.1)
  - Through a data informed needs assessment, the principal and the school leadership team determined that a concerted effort to target literacy across grades and disciplines would be critical to improving academic outcomes, including a significant portion of the student population who are below grade level in reading and writing. This literacy initiative was subsequently launched, with school-wide literacy goals established. The resulting activities include using the SOLVE method (Set up the problem, choose the Operation, Line up the facts, Verify the data, Evaluate and synthesize the process by writing about it), affording students a concrete strategy to use across all content areas to engage in their learning and understanding. Common Core Learning Standards were identified based on the alignment with the school's larger instructional framework and with critical thinking skills aimed at positioning students as post-secondary ready. Course scope and sequence documents now reflect Common Core integration and assignments across classrooms feature the instructional shifts with increased opportunities for students to write, use academic vocabulary, and engage with non-fiction text. End of unit assessments consist of essay writing tasks resulting in students producing an average of 3-4 essays per academic trimester.
  - Grade teams, along with consultants from Teachers College Writing Program and National Teachers Network, use staff meetings and professional development opportunities to align curriculum with Common Core Learning Standards. Student work from performance tasks, Regents, and summative assessments, such as midterms and finals, which are analyzed with the use of protocols borrowed from The National School Reform. The results of the analyses include the refinement of tasks to include more scaffolding, rigorous questions that require extended writing, high-level discussions, and application of knowledge. Tasks now require students to use argumentative and academic vocabulary and provide text-based evidence to better support students with literacy. As a result, increased course pass rates were seen for English language learners and for struggling readers, and there has been an overall increase in time spent on independent reading across the school. The teachers have made a commitment as a professional community to read "Teach Like a Champion" by Doug Lemov, to help support the way they reflect on their practice, and the practices they need to engage learners in as they prepare them for college and beyond.
- Students benefit from a safe and inclusive environment that supports their social-emotional and academic growth. (1.4)
  - After one year of assuming leadership, the principal has addressed student misbehavior by adding more full-time deans and partnering with *Changing the Odds*, a youth development organization that uses teen outreach and service learning to provide opportunities for students to build life skills and practice healthy behaviors. This has injected motivation and structure for the students across the building. The school

is also focusing on building relationships and trust resulting in a strong sense of community across all stakeholders. One program that truly builds trust between staff and students is the Angel Program, a volunteer initiative where staff members mentor “at risk” students needing additional social-emotional and academic support, and take them under their wing for intensive support and guidance. These programs and initiatives have resulted in a decreased suspension rate with less classroom disruption and student misbehavior. Another social-emotional support that demonstrates a culture of respect is the advisory program that is embedded within the students’ weekly program twice per week. The advisory requires students to set and meet academic and personal goals, and provides 6-week benchmarks along the way to ensure students are meeting them. In addition, a variety of issues are addressed such as bullying, how to be a leader, how to handle conflict, use their voices to create change, expectations of college, and how to attach to an extra-curricular that highlights their strengths. This advisory structure, as well as all other programs mentioned above, contributes to a more positive learning environment where every student feels safe, valued, respected, and able to voice their opinions.

- Parents appreciate the principal's open door policy and sensitivity to their individualized family needs. The principal's positive changes to the school with the inclusion of an advisory period twice per week and regular communication concerning student progress, behavior, attendance and opportunities, have impacted the trust the families have in the school. Parents, along with their children, feel comfortable sharing their concerns for continuous improvement via School Leadership Team and Parent's Association meetings, Student Ambassador consultations, and whole school Town Hall meetings. The students express appreciation for the principal's accessibility, visibility and responsiveness, and believe that she and all staff members are invested in their well-being and ensuring they are prepared for college and careers. Professional development is aligned to supporting the students’ academic and social-emotional needs, and school leaders, guidance counselors, and teachers meet weekly to discuss school-wide attendance, student behavior and targeted students across all grades who have been identified in the “Go Green” initiative to accumulate credits and pass Regents exams necessary for graduation. All teachers participate in discussing student performance and update student progress from one semester to the next using their graduation tracker system. Information is shared with parents who are also encouraged to attend meetings on a variety of topics ranging from how to read a transcript, to understanding the Common Core requirements. Consequently, all stakeholders are aware of effective supports for academic and personal growth.
- Effective school-wide assessment practices aligned to the curriculum ensure the analysis of student progress and leads to adjustment in teaching and learning for increased student progress. (2.2)
  - The principal monitors student progress by tracking several data streams that include credit accumulation for both grade promotion and improving the graduation rate, scholarship data, Regents passing rates, and interim assessments. For the most part, teacher teams are diligent in tracking results from interim assessments for their content area so they can remain informed of what content and skill deficits need to be targeted for mastery. Moreover, teams use data that assess grammar, content specific vocabulary, reading and writing, to adjust units of study and daily

lesson planning. Teachers use an online tool called *Datacation* to upload information about student performance. This progress tracker is used by teams to track student progress, and make decisions about the reliability of their assessments and what adjustments are needed. Students and parents also have the ability to view this tracker and receive up-to-date information about assessment performance. Consequently, students are aware of their strengths and areas of weakness and have the opportunity to improve their skills and demonstrate progress toward mastery. Upon interviewing students about their work, they were quick to share the rubrics that informed their writing or the preparation for a presentation/project. All students shared work that had teacher feedback and actionable next steps for improvement as it related to the rubric. Students expressed feeling more supported by a framework for assessing and completing their work and felt their final drafts had improved due to the teachers' constant checks for understanding, discussion, student "turn and talk", peer revisions and self-assessment via the rubrics. As a result of these school-wide assessment practices, teachers are able to gauge student understanding while honoring varying learning styles for increased student achievement.

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

- Establish a consistent approach to the differentiation of instruction based on data and employ questioning techniques to meet students' needs at multiple entry points in order to ensure all students are learning. (1.2)
  - School leaders and teachers meet regularly to discuss student data and the mode of lesson delivery to specific cohorts of students to ascertain that the instructional needs of all learners are being met based on reviewed outcomes. Teachers request exit slips, summaries, and ask a variety of questions to determine what students are learning and wondering. This feedback provides teachers and school leaders with vital information that guides them towards adjusting or advancing their lesson plans and the planning of professional development. However, despite these structures, most teachers still struggle with strategies and questioning techniques to push deep thinking among their students to support college and career skill development. For example, in one class a teacher posed the question, "In this instance, was his constitutional right violated?" When the question was not answered immediately, she answered her own question rather than provide the students with ample time to process, reflect on the information they had about alien and sedition rights, and respond based on their readings. In another classroom, the teacher asked a student, "Are you telling me this answer is based on textual evidence?" The student responded "Yeah". In this instance there was no follow-up asking the student to show text-based evidence and to extend and explain her verbal response. In addition across classrooms the evidence of multiple entry points or multi-faceted instruction is limited, consequently the lack of these teaching strategies do not adequately address the differentiated needs of student subgroups such as students with disabilities, English language learners and accelerated learners, as evidenced by all students being asked to complete the same task or activity without any scaffolds, or in some cases opportunities to move further once the task was completed. (b)
  - Teachers meet frequently to analyze and discuss student work during common planning time. As they discuss the tasks, they collaboratively discern if student work provides a clear picture of the impact of their

teaching strategies, questioning, and routines. Although there are rich discussions amongst teachers on their instructional observations based on the student work brought to evaluate, the level of rigor in students' work reflects inconsistent outcomes, and across classrooms observed, students' participation in discussions is not well aligned to high levels of thinking. In some work products observed at team meetings, the students' work lacked an extended writing response, or resulted in a one sentence response because the question posed from the teacher-made assessment was on a Depth of Knowledge (DOK) level of 1 or 2, where student thinking and discussion is not pushed. Consequently, students are not consistently engaged in ongoing opportunities to develop post secondary skills for college and careers.

- Deepen teacher team practices to provide teachers with a structure that serves as the core of their learning experiences and directly connects student achievement with improved teacher practice. (4.2)
  - Some teacher teams are developing academic tasks and lessons that are designed to emphasize higher-order skills and promote rigorous work products and habits. For example, one team used a protocol for looking at student work to determine where students struggled on various Regents exams questions, how they as teachers could create instructional coherence, develop strategies to support struggling students, and revise their teaching as they gauge the implications of their instruction. However, another team spent the bulk of their time discussing what they wanted to post on bulletin boards and deciding whether or not they wanted to revise their bulletin board rubric with no discussion as to how this work would support improved student outcomes. This inconsistency in the use of inquiry-approach hinders improved teacher practice and student progress toward the school-wide goal of improving Regents grades.
- Sharpen curricular improvement monitoring systems for instructional coherence across all classrooms in order to meet all students' academic needs as well as the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards. (5.1)
  - The principal assesses teacher instructional practices across grades and content areas to ensure coherence with the Danielson Framework, and teachers participate in inter-visitations to learn best practices from each other. Student work posted on bulletin boards provides school leaders and teachers a scope and sequence of the school-wide learning continuum. While there is evidence of student work juxtaposed with rubrics that align to the expectations of the CCLS, and administrative monitoring of instruction, there is still a lack of consistency amongst teaching practices across subjects and grades that are deemed to be effective, so that instructional congruence does not yet permeate throughout the building.
  - Teachers work with a coach from Columbia University to use an Understanding by Design approach to curricula mapping, and create and use rubrics to support students' mastery of the CCLS. As students are assessed, results are analyzed to ascertain students' areas of strength and areas for improvement. The principal is beginning to reflect on her organizational decisions to see if there is an alignment between school-wide needs and the citywide instructional expectations, inclusive of what teachers need to learn in support of student achievement. However, currently the school had not established defined systems to monitor teacher teams and the outcomes of professional development aligned to

what teachers need to incorporate in lessons to support high quality learning for all students. Consequently, decision-making opportunities to support increased student mastery and teachers' professional growth are limited.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: <b>Banana Kelly High School</b>	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		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>