Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

KAPPA IV

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 05M302

6 Edgecombe Avenue
Manhattan
NY 10030

Principal: Juan Vives

Dates of review: February 27, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Mark Ossenheimer

The School Context

KAPPA IV is a/an Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school with 197 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 59% Black, 35% Hispanic, 2% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013 - 2014 was 89.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school regularly...	**Area of:**	**Rating:**
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.	**Additional Findings**	**Proficient**
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	**Focus**	**Developing**
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.	**Additional Findings**	**Proficient**
School Culture		
To what extent does the school...	**Area of:**	**Rating:**
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations.	**Additional Findings**	**Proficient**
Systems for Improvement		
To what extent does the school...	**Area of:**	**Rating:**
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning.	**Celebration**	**Proficient**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote achievement of school goals. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact
Team meetings and a voice in key decisions strengthen teachers' instructional and leadership capacity and enable them to assume collective responsibility for improving student outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- The school participates in the Learning Partners Program (LPP) and is part of a group of four schools who collectively share practice and learning connected to student engagement. Teachers, administrators, and students have participated in a series of inter-school visitations and presentations building instructional resources for teachers.

- Teachers collaborate on the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) team designed to improve school climate and student achievement focusing on the social, emotional and academic outcomes for all students. The teacher-led team researched, developed, and presented the PBIS program to the administration and staff with high levels of buy-in from the community and is centered on teaching students to practice five values: Tolerance, Respect, Unity, Taking ownership, and Honesty (TRUTH).

- The observed English language arts team meeting included social studies, special education, and speech teachers in order to share practices across subjects on teaching the focus standard. For example, the team has adopted common sentence starters displayed and used in every class to foster the use of evidence in supporting claims. The agenda of the meeting centered on examining student work across subjects focused on the Common Core standards regarding argument, use of evidence, and counter-claim. This area of focus was determined by the team based on skill gaps in these instructional shifts from the Measures of Student Learning (MoSL) assessments.

- Two teachers participate in the new Model Teacher program and were selected to identify, learn and model promising instructional practices with colleagues. The program builds their leadership capacity and in turn promotes the instructional capacity of the larger teacher community. They conduct inter-visitations and lead professional development. For example, they have led staff trainings on Socratic Seminar and Reciprocal Teaching. This has created a culture of adult learning with over 50% of all teachers having led a professional development session so far this year.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Teaching practices are becoming aligned to the school's set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across classrooms, teaching strategies including scaffolds and extensions inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact
The school's instructional focus on student engagement is beginning to take root across the school; however, the unevenness of teacher practice results in varying student engagement levels in appropriately challenging tasks that demonstrate higher order thinking in student work.

Supporting Evidence

- In an English language arts class, students were purposefully grouped and engaged in a text-based assignment identifying claim and counter-claim with set roles for each student. In a social studies class students were grouped during the lesson based on the task students were working on for a project. However, in two different math classes students were not grouped strategically to complete an assignment resulting in uneven levels of engagement and completion with the task as some students sat independently, in pairs, or in larger groups of five or six based on student preference and not academic need. Discussion prompts were clearly visible in all classrooms and students in several classrooms were heard using a prompt in addressing teacher-directed questions. However, the pattern of structured discussion in the majority of classrooms observed was teacher-student/student-teacher, this pattern coupled with inconsistent scaffolding of questions in terms of Webb's Depth of Knowledge limited the number of students able to articulate their thinking and demonstrate their learning.

- Scaffolds for learners were evident in some classrooms. For example, in an English language arts class a special education teacher worked with a small group of students using highlighters and a straight edge to engage students in the reading. In another English language arts class, the speech teacher pushed-in to work with a group of students teaching sentence starters as they worked through a variety of texts. However, in the majority of classrooms all students were engaged in the same task regardless of level without scaffolds or targeted support resulting in uneven engagement with the tasks.

- There were minimal extensions readily available that left some students with nothing to engage with once the task was completed. In a math class, a group of five students sat quietly and talked amongst themselves for over five minutes after completing the assignment. In an art class, students were engaged in the same activity they had completed the day prior without any extensions to push their thinking or quality of work.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Curricula and tasks are planned and refined using student work and achievement data.

Impact
The school's curricular decisions result in coherence across grades and subjects, as well as provide access to tasks that cognitively engage a diversity of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular documents demonstrate planning using the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework that ensures assessment, tasks, and standards are aligned within units across subjects. The school uses Connected Math, Expeditionary Learning for English language arts (ELA), FOSS science and the New York City scope and sequence for social studies to ensure alignment to the Common Core.

- Core content team meetings include special education teachers, related service providers, such as speech, English as a second language teachers, and guidance so that units and tasks are designed for a diversity of learners. Staff used data from the 2013-2104 Item Skills Analysis in ELA to identify skill gaps across grades, such as standards 6.RI.9 (14.7%) 7.RL.9 (33.1%), and R.RI.8 (27.1%) that are connected to examining thematic concepts and logic to assert claims to design tasks across subjects reinforcing these standards. For example, a seventh grade ELA task asking students to identify evidence and counter-claim in a series of texts was planned specifically for the speech teacher to push-in to work with a specific group of students

- The lesson plans for the four observed English language arts and social studies classes demonstrate coherency across grades and subjects in focusing on the Common Core literacy standards of determining the central idea or theme of a text and citing textual evidence to support analysis. The math team indicated they are working to incorporate these skills into their math classes and now ask students to explain their problem-solving process using evidence.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subjects. Across classrooms, teachers use assessments and rubrics aligned to the curricula.

Impact
Assessment results provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding achievement and are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses New York State math and ELA exam item analysis as well as benchmarks in order to plan curriculum in addressing skill gaps. The data specialist formats data into color-coded item analysis by standard and teachers use this information to develop instructional foci. For example, one of the five focus standards for grade 6 ELA refers to the citing of evidence to support analysis 6.RL.1 and was identified because of a 30.0% proficiency rate in September. So that the instructional focus centers on locating evidence from text to support a specific answer, it is written as: “students can practice this skill by accurately answering a question and identifying the specific details that provide evidence for that answer.”

- The school implements four-to-six week data cycles with content teams this year that entail teams collecting standards-based data with assistance from the data specialist, analyzing the data, developing instructional adjustments, collecting evidence of adjustments and practices, and measuring impact. This process is used by the literacy team (ELA, social studies, science, and related services) in adopting the citing of textual evidence in supporting claims and counter-claims as a cross-subject and cross-grade focus. Benchmark assessments measure impact and indicate progress in these focus standards. For example, the mid-year ELA benchmark for grade 7 indicated a 16% increase in proficiency for ELL students for the focus standard 7.RI.2.

- Across the majority of classrooms, student work was posted with rubrics and detailed written feedback that included next learning steps. Students also had rubric-based work with feedback in their binders and spoke of using the feedback to improve their work during the student interview. For example, one math rubric had the feedback “You have the right strategies, but some calculation errors – always make sure you go back and check your answers.” Feedback on an ELA rubric stated “Great job with the organization of essay and counter-claim. You need to use more direct quotes next time.”

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for professionalism and instruction connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers and staff communicate academic and social expectations for all students with ongoing feedback and supports.

Impact
The school has established a culture for adult and student learning that provides necessary supports and a system of accountability to achieve high expectations and prepare students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Administration communicates both administrative and instructional expectations through a weekly email to staff “Next Week at KAPPA IV,” attends teacher team meetings engaging in the data cycle with teachers, joined the Learning Partners Program to communicate the value of collaboration and sharing of practice, and provides feedback from informal and formal observations connected to those expectations.

- Teachers are supported in meeting expectations through participation in the Model Teacher Program with two model teachers opening their classrooms for inter-visitation. Administration organizes gallery walks/school walks, faculty-led professional development sessions on instructional strategies and implementing school goals, such as data analysis and PBIS, as well as visiting the host school from the Learning Partners Program. Also, all new teachers receive one-on-one mentoring with experienced teachers.

- Students receive ongoing feedback on academic progress in the form of progress reports, report cards, and assessment rubrics. Students in the interview knew their most recent course grades, reported getting regular updates from teachers and being provided opportunities for support from teachers before or after school.

- Students stated they are prepared for the next level. For example, one grade 8 student stated that she still uses the essay writing tool from her seventh grade teacher to help her complete assignments and plans on taking it to high school with her as well. Additionally, all grade 8 students reported very active guidance supports that included the high school selection process with all applications needing drafts and school approval before submission.