

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**K.A.P.P.A.**

**Middle School X215**

**3630 Third Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Sheri Warren**

**Date of review: March 6, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Cheryl McClendon**

## The School Context

K.A.P.P.A. is a middle school with 300 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 48% Black, 47% Hispanic, 04% Asian students and 01% White students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 05% special education students. Boys account for 43% of the students enrolled and girls account for 57%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

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

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

Across grades and subjects rigorous habits and higher-order skills are elicited through the curricula and academic tasks. Curricula and academic tasks are refined using student work and data to facilitate access and cognitive engagement for all students.

### Impact

Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data so that individual and groups of students, including the lowest- and highest achieving students, English language learners, and Special Education students, have access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence

- Higher-order skills that require students to create meaning and solve real world problems are identified and embedded throughout curricula and tasks across grades and subjects. Reflected in lesson plans are Webb's Depth of Knowledge high-level essential questions such as "How can you use rational numbers to solve real-world problems?" and "What are human rights? Why do we have them and how are they protected?" In addition lesson plans contain Depth of Knowledge targets such as "Demonstrate the use of text-based quotes to support inferences." and "Determine the theme based on details in the text."
- Curricula and academic tasks across grades and subjects are structured to challenge all students to think critically and demonstrate their thinking through cognitively engaging work products. In English language arts units, students are asked to integrate reading and writing to express their points of view or to create arguments. For example in response to reading the National Geography Kids feature article, "I Escaped the Taliban" an eighth grade student authored a poignant poem in six stanzas expressing his views on overcoming oppression in a third world country.
- The school integrates Engage NY curricula and performance-based assessments with Expeditionary Learning and Go Math. Across the grades, curricula are continually refined to ensure student access. For example, at the beginning of each year, teachers administer the previous grade's end-of-year NY Ready performance-based math assessment. Data from the 6<sup>th</sup> grade assessment that was administered to the 7<sup>th</sup> grade in September revealed a deficit in standard 6.NS.3, which requires students to fluently subtract, multiply and divide multi-digit decimals using the standard algorithm for each operation. In response the 7<sup>th</sup> grade math team revised the grade 7 – unit 1 Go Math curriculum, to include instructional scaffolds in long division, and adding and subtracting fractions.
- Across subjects, unit and lesson plans contain Universal Design for Learning scaffolds which are categorized as such: representation: Power Point, anchor charts; Action/Expression: Think/Pair Share, dyad, triad, quad discussion groups. These scaffolds for students with disabilities and English language learners are embedded throughout all curricula.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Across classrooms curricula-aligned teaching practices reflect the articulated beliefs about how students learn best as informed by the Danielson Framework for teaching and provide entry points for all learners. However, these practices were not observed in some classes that were visited.

### Impact

Many classrooms exhibit practices that elicit high-level thinking and participation from all students, however student ownership and team level discussions about how students learn best are not consistently evident across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teaching practices that reflect the schools' instructional focus on using effective questioning and discussion techniques in alignment with the Danielson Framework for Teaching were observed in several classrooms. For example, in a sixth grade math class, in response to the question, "How do we translate simple verbal expressions into algebraic expressions?" students engaged in group discussions to define the math term, "reverse phrase", as the teacher circulated amongst the groups to provide support. Across the groups there were students who clarified the term for their peers, using illustrations to support understanding. However, in a self-contained special education class, while students who were seated in groups engaged in math problem-solving, student ownership was not consistently evident.
- Across classrooms visited, scaffolds were provided to facilitate multiple entry points for students such as activities that are tiered by the Depths of Knowledge gradient and opportunities for student choice within assignments. In a fifth grade social studies class, students were given two choices. One was to create a book cover depicting the anchor text, "Trial of Tears". The second choice was to create a topographical map of Louisiana during the 1905 Lewis and Clarke expedition. Choice was based on individual learning style and incorporated tactile and visual aids for students.
- As observed in a grade 7 math class, students were assigned the real-world task of figuring out their grade by calculating the average of their homework, classwork and quiz scores, to date.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms teachers use curricula-aligned assessment practices to facilitate the sharing of actionable feedback to students and teachers. Teachers use common assessments to gauge student progress toward goals and make curricular adjustments.

### Impact

The use of curricula-aligned assessments and rubrics allows teachers to provide student feedback that they can understand and act upon immediately. The analysis of common assessments facilitates necessary instructional and curricular modifications.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers provide rubrics to guide student work. Curriculum-based, Common Core-aligned and teacher developed rubrics are used to evaluate student work.
- Teachers provide rubric-aligned written feedback to students in every curriculum area. Students in turn reflect on the feedback and respond in writing; stating how they will incorporate the feedback within their work.
- Teachers confer with students during writing workshop. Conference notes are recorded on the writing conference log. Teachers use the writing conference log to plan next steps for each student writer.
- Across grades and subjects teachers administer mid-unit and end-of-unit assessments. New York Ready baseline and benchmark assessments are administered throughout the year in English language arts and math. In science, lab assessments are administered throughout the units. Teachers use entrance and exit tickets daily.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### **Findings**

School leaders create a culture of mutual accountability by conveying high expectations and providing commensurate training for the faculty. Distributed leadership structures facilitate effective teacher leadership, allowing teachers to play an integral role in key decisions.

### **Impact**

Through distributed leadership structures and professional development, teachers are supported and have a voice in key decision-making.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- At the beginning of the year, school leaders disseminate a memo detailing instructional expectations for the academic year. Instructional foci are also delineated, such as using, assessing and advancing questions, differentiation, student engagement, and writing and language development. Also articulated is an expectation for on-going progress-monitoring.
- “Knowledge of students” is a mandate!” as conveyed by the principal. The Kappa Keepers program requires that each faculty member assume responsibility for “keeping close tabs” on several designated students throughout the year. This assures that every child has at least one person that she or he can talk to about anything.
- School leaders facilitate many opportunities for teachers to demonstrate leadership such as teachers participate in the New Teacher Center School Leadership series and serve as mentors to new teachers, teachers participate in the Common Core Fellows program and serve as curriculum writers, a faculty member is in the Leadership in Education Apprenticeship Program (LEAP) and serves as an administrative intern, and instructional coaches facilitate professional development for teachers in all core areas.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based collaborations, with the analysis of student work at the core. This strengthens instructional capacity and promotes the progress toward goals for groups of students.

**Impact**

Teacher team collaboration enhances instructional capacity and attainment of goals.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher team was observed using a *Looking at Student Work* protocol to record their analyses Integrity-themed essays in response to the reading of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The focus of the analysis was the introductory “hook”. Teachers used the New York State 6-8 Writing Evaluation Rubric to rate the student writing and discussed their ratings. Team members also asked questions of the teachers who shared the student work, such as, “What writing scaffolds were provided for the student during this writing task?” Teachers recommend next steps and the presenting teachers recorded their recommendations.
- During all teacher team meetings teachers discuss possible scaffolds for English language learners and share Universal Design for Learning strategies to provide greater access for students with disabilities.
- Based on the analysis of student work and data, teacher teams establish and focus on annual goals in alignment with school wide goals. For example, in alignment with annual goal #1 which projects a 3% increase in the number of students who demonstrate increased writing proficiency across content areas, the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade English language arts team has articulated the following goal: “Students will use the Claim Evidence Reasoning (CER) method to write complete and evidence-based responses to short response questions.” The 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher team also documented assessment-based writing goals establishing the standard for the length, structure and complexity of written responses.