



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Kappa V

Middle School K518

**985 Rockaway Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Ronda Phillips

**Date of review: March 4, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Gary Knight**

The School Context

Kappa V is a middle school with 194 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 90% Black, 8% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 1% English Language Learners and 21% students with disabilities. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 93.9%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Focus	Proficient
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		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	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	Celebration	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school leader consistently communicates high expectations to the entire staff and provides training for those expectations. The school leader and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and successfully partners with families.

Impact

The consistent communication of high expectations has resulted in a culture of mutual accountability. Successful partnerships with families support student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader communicates that raising student achievement by providing students with a rigorous and engaging educational experience is the expectation for ideal teacher practice. This message is shared with staff via emails, a staff handbook, one-on-one meetings, Kappa Corner principal's memo and professional development workshops. Professional development workshops include topics such as, how to design learning targets, text based questions and strategies, reciprocal teaching and how to use authentic exemplars, and model step-by-step process of writing an essay that is aligned to a rubric.
- Administration conducts classroom observations and feedback based on professional development topics. When teachers were asked to explain how they are held accountable for set expectations, they responded, "She is a stickler for coming in to observe the strategies being implemented as a result of trainings." There is also a walk-through protocol, in which targeted feedback is immediate. On an ongoing basis, teachers conduct "lunch and learn" professional development sessions followed up with peer intervisitations, specific to strategies and skills discussed which then leads to professional conversations with feedback given. Professional development topics include reciprocal teaching, text-based questioning in English Language Arts, math, and writing an essay process.
- The school and families partner to ensure the success of the students. In addition to mailings, phone calls and emails to homes, the school in conjunction with families, plan and facilitate events such as math night, legacy of literacy, a principal's sip and chat, common core week, and a parent workshop on *Engrade*, the online grading platform, technology. These activities are used as an opportunity to further expose students to the curricula and to provide techniques to the families to support the learning experience for their children while at home.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula for all learners.

Impact

Teaching practices are informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts. Students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills, however, there were missed opportunities to optimize students' critical thinking with higher-order thinking questions.

Supporting Evidence

- Lessons included argumentative writing, making claims and providing evidence, analyzing text and identifying a central theme, key ideas and details, identifying parts of an expression using mathematical terms and identifying when two expressions are equivalent. A grade 7 class was engaged in citing several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from text. Students were also determining an author's viewpoint in a text. During the lesson, a student stated, "in the third paragraph, the author says it is 'downright ugly,' which makes it a subjective statement."
- Teaching practices incorporated multiple entry points and various scaffolds to address the belief that the use of exemplars, modeling step-by-step process of writing an essay that is rubric-aligned and applying strategies will help to ensure students improve in their writing. In one grade 6 class observed, students used an opinion/argument language frames sheet as a guide to help them state and support argument, consider the counterargument and restate their position on their leveled reading task. Similarly, in a grade 7 class, students were provided differentiated graphic organizers, based on students' scores on reading assessments, to support citing textual evidence. Students were tiered for group work activities based on each student's performance level on the benchmark and Degrees of Reading Power assessments.
- Multiple entry points were consistently provided, however, although embedded in the curricula, the execution of higher-order thinking questioning and Depth of Knowledge levels varied from lower- to mid-level and in some cases, were not observed. For example, in one English Language Arts (ELA) class students were asked, "What sentence from the text best shows that the speaker's/narrator's point of view is subjective/objective and why?" In another ELA class, students were asked to recall what they need to have in their writing. In a math class, students were asked, "How can we prove this expression and our simplified expression are equal?" Meanwhile, in another math class, students were asked, "What is the mode, median and mean?" Most students were able to respond to without hesitation, however, the teacher continued on that topic with repeated questions being asked of students to find the mode, median and mean. The actual lesson's objective was for students to use measures of center and measures of variability for numerical data from random samples to draw informal comparative inferences about two populations. This was not observed due to the extended time spent on repeated level 1 recall questioning.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills.

Impact

The school makes purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote college and career readiness across grades and subject for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- In addition to support received from the Middle School Quality Initiative partnership, the school further supports the building of coherence through professional development workshops, vertical planning and by creating horizontal planning time for content area teachers at the grade level to plan and infuse the instructional shifts. For example, since there is one teacher per subject at the grade level, the social studies and ELA teacher are presented opportunities to plan together.
- The school uses *CODEX* for ELA, *GO Math!* and *EngageNY* Scope and Sequence for science and social studies with additional supplemental resources such as *Mathletics* and *NYReady*, which are Common Core aligned computer adaptive programs that provide resources for instruction in Math and language arts. The curricula documents examined demonstrate Common Core alignment. For example, a grade 6 unit on the novel *Seedfolks*, targeted the following skills: supporting thinking with evidence from text, determine how details are used to convey the theme or central idea of a text and prepare and participate effectively in conversations and collaborations with diverse partners. A grade 7 humanities document focused on informational text and how writers organize information, and how writing structures help to understand the text. Similarly, in a grade 6 math curricular document, mathematical practices include making sense of problems and persevering in solving them, constructing viable arguments and critiquing the reasoning of others.
- Rigorous habits and higher order skills are planned through text based questions and strategies, designing of specific learning targets, essential questions, and planned performance tasks. A grade 6 math plan introduced the idea of using proportions to solve problems in addition to the ratio table. Students were expected to set up and solve a proportion that represents a real world situation. Questions included, "How many proportions do you think are needed for this problem? Why?" "Are the labels the same for both proportions? How do you know?" and "How will you set up and solve the proportions for the 18 oz. box costing \$4.50 if we want to know the price per ounce?" In a grade 7 planning document, the students' performance task was to use evidence from two texts in the unit to develop or refute the claim that mental strength and agility are just as important as physical prowess in sports with the essential question being, "What can we learn about ourselves from studying sports and athletes?" The cycle involves teachers planning, assessing and revising.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments and rubrics that are aligned with the school's curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine progress toward goals across grades and subjects.

Impact

The school's assessment practices provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. The assessment results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses a variety of assessments including but not limited to quick writes, writing on demand, quarterly benchmarks, teacher created, *NYReady* for math and language arts, Degrees of Reading Power, Measurement of Student Learning (MOSL) and periodic assessments in math and ELA every six to eight weeks. A grade 6 math teacher made test assessed students based on the pacing calendar and the standards taught during that period. Test questions are modeled from previously administered New York State exams. Specific skills pulled and assessed for this period included: computing fluently with multi digit numbers, finding common factors and multiples, measure and compare quantities using appropriate units, instruments, and methods, estimate measurements and determine acceptable levels of accuracy, select and use appropriate technology, instruments, and formulas to solve problems, interpret results, and communicate findings.
- Various rubrics are used throughout the school. One such example is a process skills rubric for science that assesses skills in measuring, communicating, using number relationships, inferring, predicting, observing and classifying. Rubrics are also used for class debates, writing reports and short responses. Some examples of rubrics used in math are for line graphs, multiples and least common multiples, and three-point response. Students receive feedback that includes comments such as, "Your use of ratio table to help was great. You have correct number of flowers but you did not explain each step. You are missing part about the sums." Student feedback on a writing assignment read as follows, "Strong text evidence to support your claim. Your analysis is lacking. You need to fully explain evidence and connect it to your claim."
- Teachers conduct analysis of student data, reflect on data, identify gaps, and develop a six-week instructional plan to adjust instruction. Based on this data driven cycle, teachers identify students who did not perform well, as well as their major area(s) of weakness and determine strategies, such as small group instruction, to address skill deficits. For example, author's purpose was identified as a skill not mastered. To help students with this skill, the teacher plans to pull out and annotate key details in the question stem, have students scan story and find where the information in the question is first mentioned, read the paragraph that contains the detail and underline necessary information to answer the question.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or whom they are focused.

Impact

The structured, inquiry based collaborations have strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers. The analysis of student work typically results in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's team structures include content and grade level inquiry teams, professional development team and a main inquiry team which focuses on a select group of students based on student performance and data. Teachers use the ATLAS protocol for looking at student work where the facilitator presents an assignment, the group gathers information from student work capturing notes on what they see, interprets student work, determines implications for practice, including next steps and strategies, and finally allows for the presenter to reflect upon what they learned about students during the process.
- The math team was observed as they engaged in the inquiry process of looking at student work regarding word problems. Teachers noticed all students restated questions, understood setting up the proportion, and the use of cross method multiplication in their response, but some students missed steps to accurately solve. Next steps identified were to write out the steps, work on decimals with one student and have them write responses in complete sentences. Teacher recognized the need to reemphasize the steps and have the students rewrite steps, reteach decimals, and that students must show decimals in their work.
- Teachers shared that the professional collaborations help them to identify areas that are most important for students and stretches their capacity as they engage in teacher conversations around student data and the use of student data to inform instruction. For example, a grade 7 teacher used student outcomes to identify skill deficits with specific standards, such as, division, volume of rectangular prisms, and ratio and rates, and created color-coded groupings for re-teaching of skills. Teachers also get the opportunity to ask each other questions that help to guide them through the curriculum and to see things in a new light. For example, a science teacher now focuses more on the medium and lower performing students and is more strategic in dissecting test questions in an effort to better plan lessons.
- Teachers use a student assessment tracker that monitors students' progress by standard and allows teachers to capture the level of intervention needed for each student. For example, in a grade 8 math class it was identified that a student did not solve linear systems by elimination problems correctly and needed intensive support. Teachers then developed next steps such as tiered grouping and small group instruction. This mechanism is in place across grades and subjects.