



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

John F. Kennedy Jr. School

High School Q721

**57-12 94th Street
Queens
NY 11373**

Principal: Henry Renelus

**Date of review: January 5-6, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Robin Cohen**

The School Context

John F. Kennedy Jr. School is a high school with 483 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 21% Asian, 20% Black, 42% Hispanic, and 15% White students. The student body includes 42% English Language Learners and 100% students with disabilities. Boys account for 68% of the students enrolled and girls account for 32%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 84.8%.

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	Well Developed
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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Focus	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	Additional Findings	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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Curricula-aligned teaching practices reflect an articulated and coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, as embodied in the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts. Teaching strategies tactically provide multiple entry points and high quality supports and extension into the curricula for all learners.

Impact

Across all classrooms, the unified Common Core aligned curricula have fostered widespread teacher collaboration, produces a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and teaching practices that meet the needs of all learners to produce meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Throughout the school there is a guiding principle that students learn best when given a balance of both academic and functional instruction, practical and hands-on, and promote student independence. School leaders and teachers stated that input from all stakeholders aided in the formation of this belief system. In a (12:1:1) bilingual class for students in alternate assessment, students were learning about different jobs and skills needed to work in a restaurant. Students chose the roles of “host/hostess, waiter, inventory checker, cashier, and manager” in the school’s Cafe. Some of the students were aided by paraprofessionals, a few needed verbal prompting, while other students performed the tasks independently.
- Pedagogical approaches vary according to the student population. Structured Teaching (TEACCH), Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) was evident during classroom visits. Teachers use visual aids such as; First/Then boards, cue cards and graphic organizers to support student needs. For example, in an 8:1:1 class, the learning target was to identify the main characters and their individual traits in the book *The Outsiders*. Students had individualized adapted books and the story was displayed on the interactive whiteboard. The teacher modeled the activity, students moved into small groups, and used their preferred mode of communication to share their thinking. Teachers consistently prompted students to “turn and talk” to their neighbor.
- The school stresses the push-in model for related service providers. Classroom teachers collaborate with speech teachers developing more cognitively challenging question and discussion techniques to increase students’ communication skills. In a 6:1:1 class for students with autism, the learning target was to have students express their emotions to others in a poem. The speech teacher asked the students to “describe how you think he feels” and “can you predict what will happen next?”
- Notebooks, journals, and bulletin boards show tasks that offer students opportunities to engage in cognitively challenging activities that develop critical thinking skills. For example, in a 12:1:1 class, students were asked what they knew about immigration and slavery in the middle colonies. Students used a Know-Wonder-Learn (KWL) chart, completed the “know” and “wonder” section, read the article, then filled in the “learn”.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school uses common assessments and rubrics, aligned to its curricula to determine student progress. Teachers check for understanding, make curricula adjustments, and provide actionable feedback.

Impact

School leaders and teachers have an ongoing understanding of the performance and progress of all students which informs instructional practices at the team and classroom level. However, student self-assessment and peer-to-peer assessment varies, thereby limiting student awareness of their next steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Data is taken from various resources such as Students Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI), aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, used for creating students' Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and for instructional purposes. School leaders stated the instructional focus for 2015-2016 school year was based on SANDI results, which indicated the need to increase student-to-student communication skills. The school uses New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) as their Measure for Student Learning (MOSL) and the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) goals. In addition, the school utilizes *Attainment* Data Keeper to address math and English Language Arts instructional shifts and track progress of each student. Ongoing checks for understanding, evident during classroom visits, included thumbs up/thumbs down, cold calling, checklists, exit slips, and rubrics that meet the cognitive level of students. Teacher feedback is included on student work products; however, in some classrooms feedback did not vary in style, thereby limiting some students' awareness of their next learning steps.
- Teachers use data to identify students' area of need, establish class-wide instructional foci, and form flexible reading and math groups. Students are aware of the concept of grouping, however, some students are not always able to articulate either verbally or through the use of communication devices, the range of work that needs to be done with their peers. Student work samples are reviewed weekly as seen during a collaborative team meeting. Teachers stated they use the data to make adjustments to their lessons such as; additional teacher modeling, supplemental hands-on materials, and utilizing technology. For example, in a 12:1:4 math class, the learning target was to use math to solve problems. The teacher introduced new vocabulary (most, least, equal) and new calendar vocabulary (row and column). The teacher stated, "She will have to reteach, presenting two distinct lessons."
- In a 12:1:1 alternate assessment math class, students were directed into small groups and were expected to help each other through a battery of questions such as: "What are the choices on the graph"; "Explain how you got your answer"; and "What would happen if ...?" This activity supported a class-wide instructional foci to "participate in group work and contribute actively to find the solution". However, teachers stated there is a need to focus on strengthening peer-to-peer assessment practices, thereby fostering collaboration amongst students. In addition, students were given time to self-assess; however, early prompting by adults was noted in some classrooms.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
--------------------	----------------	---------	----------------

Findings

Strategic curricular decisions made by school leaders and staff have resulted in alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and Career Development Occupational Studies (CDOS) standards, and tactically integrate the instructional shifts. The school continues to deepen, expand, and refine their curriculum maps and units of study to ensure a range of learning experiences, thereby engaging all students in academics and life skills.

Impact

Curricular decisions ensure coherence across all sites and subject areas; provide instruction that is relevant, fosters and supports student independence, academic and behavioral growth, and college and career readiness skills. Multiple access points are regularly planned to cognitively engage all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The school provides a curriculum (*Attainment*) that is aligned to the standards, fosters and supports student independence, academic and behavioral growth, and provides college and career readiness skills. For example, the school's work-study department uses *Attainment's* transition curriculum which is relevant and applicable to real life experiences such as: Safety Skills, Focus on Feelings, Explore Budgeting, and Whose Future is It. For instance, in a 12:1:1 class, the focus of the lesson was to learn how to "shop on a budget". Students reviewed the grocery's circular, made a list of necessities, and calculated a 10% discount for paying cash in lieu of a credit card.
- *Attainment* provides students with content-rich instruction and informational text that are both age and functionally appropriate. Content area teachers emphasize literacy experiences in their planning and instruction, as seen during classroom visits. The school's curriculum committee, in place for three years, created a project-based curriculum framework for cluster teachers, whose subjects are not currently support by *Attainment*. For example, in a 12:1:1 music class, the learning objective was to work with partners to assess technique, strumming, and chord fingering. In line with the school's instructional goal, students had discussions, some with verbal prompting, building on others' ideas and expressing their own.
- The curriculum committee created a pacing calendar to support teachers and ensure coherence across high school grades and sites, including worksites. The focus of the curriculum committee is to continue to review, refine and adapt the curriculum maps and units of study to meet the needs of their diverse student population. In addition, the curriculum committee updated the recommended lesson plan template to include an explicit connection to the instructional focus to ensure student-to-student communication is being addressed during every period of every day.
- The school's belief of assuring access for all learners is embedded in all lesson planning. Entry points for all students, including English as a New Language (ENL), is a collaborative decision making approach that strategically focus on the individual elements of a lesson, while considering the learning styles of the students. A team of teachers have collaborated and have books translated into Spanish and Mandarin.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

Commensurate with school leaders' consistently conveyed high expectations are professional development opportunities provided to support teachers in meeting those expectations. The faculty conveys to families expectations and on-going feedback that are aligned to college and career readiness skills and illuminate students' progress.

Impact

All staff members are supported towards meeting the high expectations of school leaders. Parents are well informed about their children's progress, and students are prepared for transition from school to work and the community.

Supporting Evidence

- At the beginning of every school year, school leaders distribute and review the staff handbook, which delineates expected classroom practices, expected classroom management strategies, recommended lesson plan format, developed by the curriculum committee, and homework policy. School leaders effectively articulate high expectations through a variety of means such as: the principal's weekly staff calendar noting deadlines, protocols and procedures, faculty meetings, post-observations, and conference day workshops, as stated by classroom teachers and paraprofessionals during classroom visits.
- All staff are encouraged to register for professional development opportunities provided by District 75, utilizing the website. School leaders stated "this allows for proper tracking of attendance". Participants are asked to complete the Professional Development Reflection Form to determine whether to "turn-key the workshop or to provide further support for all instructional professionals". School leaders meet with new teachers on a monthly basis to discuss issues pertinent to their success such as: planning, preparation and pacing. In addition, school leaders and teacher leaders coordinate and/or facilitate professional development workshops for teachers during, "*Lunch and Learn*" sessions, thereby ensuring mutual accountability.
- School leaders and staff actively partner with families to ensure and support students' path toward college and career readiness. Parents receive monthly newsletters informing families regarding the school's procedures and policies, curriculum and assessments, their behavior program, and community resources. To further strengthen a school-home relationship which helps foster and support student achievement, families are invited to participate in the Family Gallery Walk where each class and individual students present their rigorous work based on specific content area subjects and concepts. Students displayed and spoke about their work on topics such as, "Being a Good Citizen", "*The Outsiders*", "Values and Decisions", and "Algebraic Equations". In addition, to support families, a translation team consisting of teachers and paraprofessional who speak languages other than English are employed to increase parent involvement as stated by parents during their meeting.
- Presently, seventeen students have moved to a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) setting, six students have terminated their related services, fourteen students have a reduction in related services, and five students have terminated their 1:1 paraprofessional. In addition, the school has increased community work-sites from thirty-five to forty-seven.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	---	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based Professional Learning Networks (PLN) that examine and analyze student work and develop school-wide instructional practices. Embedded leadership structures offer a means for teachers to have input on key decisions regarding curricula and pedagogy.

Impact

The work of PLNs enable teachers to play an integral role in key decisions regarding curricula, pedagogy, and academic and behavior interventions, ensuring a shared commitment to attaining school goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Professional Learning Networks (PLN), meet twice per week, both within and across sites, and follow a two meeting cycle. Teachers are grouped according to the student population (6:1:1, 8:1:1, 12:1:1, and 12:1:4). On a weekly basis, the first meeting is led by an administrator, and the second meeting is independently guided by teachers following a rotation of tasks. Teachers stated that all meetings have a specific focus such as analyzing data derived from assessments or looking at student work based on a specific skill such as sequencing. The school uses the Atlas protocol for looking at student work and follows the procedures. During a PLN meeting, a teacher presented and described the focus of the lesson, the sequencing of events in the story *The Outsiders*. Members then asked clarifying questions, such as “Did you include visuals with the text?” The team then analyzed the work, and suggested possible strategies for classroom practice such as including pictures or graphic organizers to support the students’ need.
- During a Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) team meeting, staff reviewed SWIS data and noted that incidents had dropped except for those of two students. Team members then discussed different strategies and interventions that potentially can be implemented within the classroom. In addition, there are Behavior Intervention Planning (BIP) meetings that are designed for students who do not have 1:1 crisis paraprofessionals. The PBIS team has created the Respect, Organization, Cooperation, Kindness and Safety (ROCKS) Acknowledgment System, encouraging students to earn points when they demonstrate specific behaviors outlined in the ROCKS rubric. During each period, students can earn up to 10 points and at the end of the week points are tallied and recorded in a class point book. Students who earn between 400-450 points and attend Friday “club of choice”. Students were able to tell me why and which clubs they are going to on Friday.
- The PLNs inform decisions regarding the implementation of their standards-based curricula, and provide modifications as needed to support individual students’ academic and behavioral growth. For example, each PLN created mini-foci that illustrate how teachers of a particular student population will facilitate student-to-student communication. Teachers take on leadership roles such as; data specialists, department heads, grant writers, provide professional development workshops, and support the school’s instructional focus on developing strategies to increase students’ communication skills. In addition, two teachers and two assistant principals have partnered with the Leaders in Education Apprenticeship Program (LEAP).