



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Office of Accountability
2008-2009**

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

KAPPA IV

**Middle School 302
6 Edgecombe Avenue
New York
NY 10030**

Principal: Briony Carr

Dates of review: February 4 – 5, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Gale Reeves

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

KAPPA IV is a middle school with 291 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 45% Black, 53% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 94.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 89% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

Students and parents value the supportive tone and environment provided at KAPPA IV. Although the school day is longer than most traditional public schools, teachers and families embrace the established high expectations. School leaders ensure that there is an open door policy and parents welcome the ongoing feedback provided to them. There is a high level of communication and collegiality among all members of the community. The principal and assistant principals work as a unified team to communicate their vision and high levels of expectations to all school constituents.

School leaders have taken preliminary steps to address the areas of concern noted in last year's Quality Review and the school demonstrates the capacity to continue to improve. A system that supports data collection and analysis is now in place. The school, however, remains stronger in the collection of, rather than the utilization of data to establish clear benchmarks for students in all core subjects. Although goals are developed, these are not yet quantifiable. Additionally, written, measurable interim benchmarks are not established and clearly defined in order to track and support students' learning. As such, the feature of gathering and analyzing data and using it to monitor progress continues to be an area needing improvement.

Teachers are excited about the data initiative that is newly in place. They attempt to differentiate their lessons. However, although at times students work in small groups, the group work does not ensure that all students are appropriately challenged. This is especially true for higher achieving students.

A formal mentoring program is now in place to support new teachers. Additionally, via adaptations made in the schedule this school year, common planning periods are in place to support the pedagogical needs of the staff. While there are varied opportunities for professional development, a school wide professional development plan is not yet developed. Additionally, individualized professional development plans to assist with the alignment of school priorities are not yet developed collaboratively with each teacher.

There has been little improvement noted in the monitoring and evaluation feature of the school's work. Because established goals are not quantifiable, and short-term benchmarks are not yet developed, school leaders are unable to monitor appropriately so that they can make the necessary corrective actions needed to accelerate student learning.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and staff communicate high expectations to all students and families.
- The administration has developed a culture of trust, respect and collaboration that encourages teachers to learn from each other and supports the personal growth of students and staff.
- School leaders provide opportunities for professional development that encourage teachers to evaluate their classroom practices and become reflective practitioners.
- The administration has moved rapidly in collating and analyzing a range of data about student performance, which is shared with teachers and parents.
- The school has developed a broad curriculum in all subject areas that is aligned with state standards.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine, develop and communicate quantifiable goals in all subject areas with teachers and students.
- Establish interim benchmarks in all core subjects as part of goal setting so that school constituents can assess student progress toward meeting established learning targets.
- Implement individual professional goals in collaboration with each teacher that align with school priorities and the established curriculum.
- Extend communication with parents to share the precise student goals and interim targets that students need to master in order to reach those goals.
- Continue to refine the analysis of data in order to deliver lessons focused on meeting the differentiated needs of individuals and groups of students.

Part 3: Main Findings

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is underdeveloped with proficient features.

The principal and staff have moved rapidly in collating and analyzing a range of data about student performance. The school has enlisted the assistance of consultants from *Teaching Matters Inc.* who assist teachers and administrators with the analysis of English language arts, science, music and math data. Teachers in all classrooms now systematically maintain data binders. This initiative is in its first year. Teachers indicate that they have made "great strides" in the use of data. Administrators note that the proficiency levels of girls is higher than that of boys but have not matched this noted disparity with an in depth action plan that addresses varied subgroups. As such, while school improvement action plans have proven effective with lower performing students, they have not yet addressed opportunities to plan modifications that are more specific to the needs of subgroups such as boys or African American students.

The principal and assistant principals engage in ongoing conversations with staff and parents about student performance. The majority of parents, approximately 85 %, attends parent teacher conferences and receives student progress reports three times yearly by mail. The school however, is currently stronger in the collection of, rather than in the utilization of data to establish clear benchmarks for students in all core subjects. Core subjects do not have interim benchmarks and are not yet developed so that constituents can assess student progress toward meeting established learning targets. All teachers utilize rubrics and provide students with clear, detailed, written feedback on their work. However, they have not yet systematized the analysis of student performance in order to establish measurable benchmarks for individuals and groups of students to address their learning needs. Short-term goals are not yet identified and articulated to both students and parents so that all constituents can clearly articulate the next learning steps.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is underdeveloped with proficient features.

Through data analysis, the principal notes some trends. These trends translate into the principal's performance goals and into the Comprehensive Educational Plan. Goals in the Comprehensive Educational Plan have a major aim of closing the achievement gap of the lowest performing students in English language arts, math, social studies and science. Varied constituents in the school community provide suitable input in the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan.

The administration and staff in varied subject areas set broad content goals. These goals however are not quantifiable. The school is at the beginning stages of this work.

As noted by school leaders, the school is in the “embryonic” stages of goal setting. Classroom goals are developed and clearly posted in some classrooms. These goals also lack measurability and are generally broad; for example “read more often” and “choose complex books.”

Teachers have a good understanding of students’ achievement levels. However, this knowledge does yet not translate into the development of measurable learning goals. There are also no differentiated plans and established timeframes for reaching these goals. Some teachers note that it is important that they “not stigmatize” assessment results so that students know where they are and continue to become more comfortable with feedback.

The principal and administrators set high expectations for themselves and the school community. School leaders effectively communicate high expectations to all parents and teachers. Teachers, in turn, share these expectations with all students. Administrators and staff work hard to keep parents informed about student progress and achievement. This contributes to the good relationships between staff and caregivers. Parents state that the school “expects a lot from your child” and feel that the school helps to prepare students to be successful in high school and college. Although parents know high expectations are set, they are however unaware of established school goals and do not know of any set timeframes to measure student achievement. Students also set goals for themselves but these goals are also broad and lack specificity – example “to read more” or “to improve vocabulary.” This demonstrates that students are unsure of the steps they need to take in order to achieve set targets. Since teachers do not establish measurable benchmarks, they too are unable to assess interim student achievement. Instead, they must wait until the formative or summative assessment is given, before they are able to note success or failure.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

School staff utilize the Understanding by Design curriculum framework for all core content subject areas. The designed curriculum appropriately aligns with each state standard. The core curriculum is interesting and is shared broadly with the school community. Students are exposed to all requisite middle school course work including foreign language, physical education/health and music. Greek culture and language is infused throughout the school. Many teachers utilize smart boards as an instructional tool, which serves to further enhance the curriculum. School trips, both national and international, afford students the opportunity to make real world connections to the units of study. Students explain that discussions and projects “help make lessons engaging.” They like working in pairs and groups when completing hands on tasks. As such, many students report that they especially like science because of the varied experiments that they perform. Throughout the school, student work is celebrated and is prominently displayed on bulletin boards and rubrics are well utilized to provide written feedback to students. The rubrics, along with exemplar pieces of posted student work, help solidify the high expectations of expected student performance.

Some teachers attend conferences on differentiated instruction, although this work is at the beginning stage. School leaders and teachers report that they plan and provide differentiated learning activities to students. Students at times work in small groups;

however, lessons lack extensions or the appropriate tasks that serve to challenge the needs of higher performing students. Teachers do not yet effectively use the data provided from their assessment system to inform the development of differentiated tasks in their lessons. As such, they fail to deliberately develop and provide differentiated tasks to individuals and groups of students. More often than not, students can select between two or three options of activities. This choice however, does not ensure that students are appropriately challenged. In some classes, students engage with the same task regardless of their level of understanding. This results in some students being insufficiently challenged.

The principal maximizes the budget in order to ensure that appropriate resources are available to teachers and students. The science lab and music room are fully equipped to meet students' needs. There are after school programs and a Saturday Academy. They provide support to students who need small group assistance with specific learning skills, as well as to provide enrichment to students who are performing at higher levels but who have regressed on state assessments. The principal purchased agenda books for each student which help foster students' organizational skills. Students record their homework in these books. Parents sign the agenda books nightly, thereby reinforcing the shared accountability between home and school.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal and assistant principals conduct frequent walkthroughs throughout the school day. School leaders conduct both formal and informal observations and provide teachers with feedback that ensures support for improved classroom practice. A clear individualized professional development plan designed to assist with the alignment of school priorities and the curriculum is not yet collaboratively developed with each teacher. As a result, school leaders have not yet established written long-range goals that would also serve to inform teachers' progress.

Mentors and other grade or content level colleagues effectively support new teachers. This level of collegiality ensures that new teachers are quickly embraced into the culture of the school. Focused intervisitations facilitate the teaching staff's ability to expand their instructional skills. These intervisitations also help to build leadership skills. As a result, the administration knows the strengths of their teachers very well. Teachers state that they receive "tremendous" support and, as a result, their pedagogical skills have quickly progressed. Common planning periods support the professional development needs of teachers. This assists the development of consistent practices across the school. Teachers respond to professional development surveys and the results help to develop professional development topics.

This year the inquiry team has expanded. There are now two teams (English language arts and math). Indications that the progress made by higher achieving students dipped last year led to one team's focus placed appropriately on higher achievers who have lost gains, while the second team remains focused on the school's lowest third. While long-term goals are developed, the teams have not yet established short-term goals with interim benchmark targets. As a result, they are unable to clearly determine mastery of the intervention strategies and are unsure if last year's work has influenced school wide change. Additional teachers have joined the inquiry team and team members report that

there is a school wide level of increased interest in data. As such, there is also a TERC data team supported by consultants from *Teaching Matters Inc.* Established and well-utilized collaboration group norms support the rapid growth in the cohesive work of this team. A review of the data, with an initial focus on 7th grade English language arts, has led teachers to realize that specific skills are not explicitly taught. As a result, teachers have begun to incorporate these skills into their daily lesson plans.

The guidance counselor provides additional support services to students and their families. There are early morning assembly discussions, where leaders review expectations and discuss social issues with all students. This further enhances their personal and academic growth. All 6th, 7th and 8th grade students engage in a character development program that is a part of their course syllabus for the year. Course requirements necessitate that students read and engage in discussions around topics and activities presented in Steven Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Successful Teens*. Students benefit from the counseling and other academic and intervention services that are available to them.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is underdeveloped with proficient features.

Teachers of English language arts and math conduct an analysis of data. Teachers regularly meet with school leaders and consultants to analyze assessment results and to conduct item skills analysis in order to determine students' learning needs. However, because established goals are not quantifiable, and short-term benchmarks in core subjects are not yet developed, school leaders and staff are unable to monitor and make the necessary corrective actions needed to fully differentiate lessons that support and accelerate student learning.

There is a shared understanding of the need to improve the utilization of data in all core subjects in order to demonstrate the improved pedagogical practices that influence learning. Additionally, since classroom goals are broadly developed and defined, the school does not yet know when individuals or groups of students' knowledge is challenged in order to further accelerate learning. This is especially true for higher performing students.

The school's self-evaluation, though brief, provides an accurate representation of the present status of the school. The principal has a clear vision. She focuses on improving the social / emotional and academic needs of all students. Her vision is shared and communicated with all members of the school community, inclusive of parents. However, the principal has not yet ensured that her vision translates into quantifiable goals, interim benchmarks and a measurable system that will enable the school community to revise periodically the school's plans in order to monitor its level of success.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: KAPPA IV MS 302	Δ	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score		X		
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?		X		
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?		X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X		
Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?		X		
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?		X		
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X		

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYO, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?		X		
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?		X		
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X	
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X	
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

<i>To what extent do...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?		X		
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?		X		
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?		X		
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X		

Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed