

Charlotte-Mecklenburg



Quality Review Report

Ardrey Kell High School

**10220 Ardrey Kell Road
Charlotte NC 28277**

Principal: Michael Mathews

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Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Ardrey Kell High School (AK) serves students in grades 9 through 12. The current school enrollment is 1848. The student enrollment comprises 13 percent African-American, 66 percent White, 10 percent Asian, 7 percent Hispanic, 3 percent Multi-Racial, and 1 percent American Indian. The percent of exceptional children (EC) is 6 percent. Five percent of students have been designated limited English proficiency (LEP). Eleven percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. The school's average attendance is 95 percent which is above the State and district averages. There have been 100 principal's suspensions in the 2007-08 school year.

The school has 17 supplementary/office staff and 138 certified teachers. Ardrey Kell is an ABC designated School of Excellence having met the 2008 CMS growth expectation with 90.5 percent of students achieving end of course (EOC) results at proficient and above. The graduation rate is 93 percent. The current principal is the school's first and founding administrator, opening the school in new buildings in September 2006. The school has been granted additional freedom and flexibility with accountability as part of a CMS pilot initiative.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school achieves high standards based on the NC ABC program expectations.
- The school is a model of academic excellence in preparing students for college.
- The principal has high expectations for the staff and students; he leads the school strategically with clear vision.
- The administration's decisions and goal-setting are informed by the analysis of student data to impact learning.
- The administrators and leadership team members are visible throughout the building to monitor the quality of instruction and student learning.
- Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and understanding of the subjects taught.
- Most students demonstrate the school's values through their hard work, high performance, and good behavior.
- There is mutual respect between staff and students.
- The school is clean, safe, purposeful, and very well resourced to support student learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve school-wide strategies for addressing the school's growing disparity in the academic achievements of Hispanic and African-American students.
- Improve the quality of instruction by:
 - identifying and developing instructional leaders in the school
 - continuing the school-wide implementation of effective questioning to impact students' critical thinking
 - fully engaging all students in lessons
 - implementing rigor in standard-level classes
 - implementing the use of assessments (formal/informal and common) to differentiate strategies based on student needs
 - developing teachers' strategies for effective writing across the curriculum.
- Develop the skills of the school improvement plan (SIP) leadership team in monitoring and communicating the SIP priorities, goals and actions to all stakeholders, provide incremental evidence of progress and goal-attainment, and provide the flexibility to change course if needed according to data.
- Develop the Professional Learning Community (PLC) to personalize and impact teachers' individual professional development.
- Establish closer links and partnership with English as a second language (ESL) and other under-represented families.

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation:

This is a high quality school.

Ardery Kell's founding principal is a visionary leader who works strategically with his staff to achieve high academic results. In the short space of three years, has become a CMS School of Excellence with an outstanding achievement record for the majority of students' EOC results at 90.2 percent proficiency and above, outscoring the district and State averages. Expected growth was achieved in all tested subjects and 17 of the 21 AYP targets were met. EC and LEP students make good progress due to the challenging curriculum, skillful instruction, and very good support they receive.

Students make especially good progress in advanced placement (AP) and in most honors courses. However, in standard courses, student learning experiences are more varied and at times lack the same degree of challenge seen in AP classes, for example. Relationships are good and students show respect for their teachers and for each other. There is a very positive climate of respect which enhances student learning, little learning time is lost dealing with student infractions.

The school's professional learning community (PLC) is in an early stage of development to personalize and impact teachers' individual professional development. The principal is improving the skills of the leadership team in decision making, monitoring, and communicating the school improvement plan (SIP) to all stakeholders. The SIP has clearly focused goals to address student learning. Incremental evidence of progress and goal-attainment has yet to provide the administration with the measures and flexibility to measure the effectiveness of the SIP actions and to make adjustments to plans informed by analyzed data. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities, computer technology, and high quality resources that enhance student learning. There is 'Knights' pride and school-wide identity among adults and students alike. School-wide strategies for promoting good behavior are effective and attendance is high (95 percent). The administration has made explicit efforts to solicit the participation of all parents in the life of the school. The parents speak highly of the administrators and the school staff relating to the school's high quality education and the care they provide for the students.

Criterion 1: Achievement

The school demonstrates high levels of academic achievement in the core subjects and the trend of achievement shows improvement at all grades in all subjects. The school uses available student performance data to take and adjust actions to improve the quality of students' learning.

This area of the school's work is high quality.

The 2008 ABC's composite indicates 90.5 percent achievement with high growth for the school to receive recognition as a 2008 CMS School of Excellence. In the 2008 EOC tests, students achieved a composite of 90.4% at proficiency and above in the core subject areas. In the testing composite, all subgroups made progress. Ninety percent of CTE students show mastery on the 2008 Vocational Career and Technical tests, another form of performance assessment. Eighty-four percent of AK students tested in 2008 made the expected EOC growth when compared to the two previous school years, which is above the State average. In comparison, 65 percent of students tested for the same period were assessed as having learned as much as expected in 2008 which also indicates growth higher than the State (60 percent). Ninety-six percent of seniors enroll in AP courses, of whom 79 percent met the expected pass rate for the 2008 cumulative AP tests. Based on the proportion of students who started high school on grade level, and who took three or more AP courses by the end of their senior year, 93 percent met the expected participation rate.

In the 2008 EOC tests, grade 10 students' achievement in writing shows disparities in the results for Hispanic, African-American, and LEP students test results ranging between 74 to 76 percent respectively when compared to White students (95 percent). English 1 results give the school high growth status with growth in all subgroups, including EC and LEP students, but 2008 results show lowest achievement at grade level for Hispanic students (53 percent) with higher LEP results (73 percent). Similar patterns are seen in the biology EOC results with the lowest proficiency percentage among Hispanic students (68 percent), LEP (71 percent), and African-Americans (79 percent) compared to the results of White students (91 percent). The chemistry EOC indicates the

lowest proficiency percentages among African-American students (67 percent), compared to Hispanic, LEP, and White students who scored proficiency and above at 83 percent or higher. Algebra 1 growth status was not met. The school met 17 of the 21 AYP targets, a target growth from 8 in the previous school year to reflect the growth in the school's diversity. The three AYP criteria not met are due to the school's participation rate being lower than required by the No Child Left Behind mandates.

Criterion 2: Curriculum

The curriculum is relevant and appropriate to the needs of all children, across all grades, and for all sub-groups in the student population.

This area of the school's work is high quality.

The school meets North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) State standards in the courses it offers to all students. The school community fosters and maintains a college-going school culture through the curriculum for those students motivated to take up courses that prepare them for college. In addition to the core subjects, AK offers students a curriculum with the breadth to provide extension courses for honors, AP, and high level electives such as AP music theory, psychology, Latin, AP calculus and statistics. The career and technical education courses provide opportunities for students to undertake studies in business, marketing, health occupations, pre-engineering, interior design, parenting and childcare, computer programming, and drafting. The school's internship program promotes eligible students working with businesses. The school sets high academic standards to ensure that most students are ready for postsecondary education. Students who register for college classes become part of the college experience program at Central Piedmont Community College.

Individualized learning and enrichment opportunities are provided to meet the learning needs of some groups and individuals; for example, there are specialized classes for EC and LEP students that provide small class settings to address individual learning needs. For those students in need of credit recovery and learning support, teachers offer individual and group tutoring. The school offers an intervention 'core' academy and Saturday sessions to further assist students. All students belong to a homeroom which doubles as advisory periods to monitor student credit accumulation, attendance, and academic progress. The advisory periods follow the school's own designed character education program where members of staff observe, monitor and engage students in dialogue to promote their social and academic growth. The school is well-resourced to enhance students' accessibility to the curriculum. All classes have internet access and the student to computer ratio is 2:1. The media center is well-equipped with new technology that is frequently used by staff and students for information technology classes and research purposes. Curriculum software such as science programs to accompany the core textbooks which are NCSCOS aligned. Culturally relevant and sensitive materials, instructional methods and assessments are intentionally integrated into the curriculum. The school provides a very good array of extra-curricular activities and sports to complement the curriculum.

Criterion 3: Learning and teaching

Student learning, progress and standards are a direct result of challenging instruction and high quality teaching. Decisions are based on use of data and evidence.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The quality of learning and teaching is consistently good with the most rigorous and challenging lessons demonstrated in the AP courses where the quality of teaching is well-developed and in most cases, high quality. Where relevant, teachers refer to the NCSCOS and work collaboratively in planning their lessons at department and subject levels. Teachers' planning, in most cases, reflects learning objectives aligned to the content standards. The majority of teachers across all subject areas have high subject knowledge and most facilitate student learning very well. In a few honor courses, and in most standard-level classes observed, however, lessons are not always well-paced to address the NCSCOS standards. Teachers consistently use the NCSCOS to plan their lessons, but the work is not always challenging enough to meet the demands of a high school curriculum as evident in standard-level classes which do not consistently provide opportunity to actively engage all

students in pair/share or collaborative activities. In the standard-level lessons the quality of teaching is not of the same consistently high quality as in honors and AP classes. This is because there is insufficient attention to the higher order skills required for students to master the core-subject standards and to consolidate learning. The diverse learning needs of the students in these classes are also an area which needs focus if all students are to make high growth and good progress. A few standard-level lessons are taught at knowledge level and therefore do not provide students with the challenge to be analytical, synthesize information and to consolidate their learning.

Most students work hard and strive to do their best. When opportunities are provided, students take initiatives in their learning such as producing challenging journalism projects, formulating their own scientific hypotheses and taking responsibility for their learning. At the start of lessons, the learning objective is written on the board, but a few teachers do not always explain it or discuss it with students so that they know what they are expected to learn and can relate it to the course of study. Common assessments have been developed for English, biology and math. Other core subject areas are following suit. The interim benchmark assessment results are used to assess student mastery of standards and to drive teacher reflection and improvement of practice. Additionally teachers produce their own assessments such as quizzes which are delivered regularly in classes, with additional use of rubrics and assessments for presentations, projects and unit exams.

Criterion 4: Leadership and management

The school has a high quality leadership and management team with a clear vision, ambition and goals; a focus on student achievement; a sense of purpose and high aspirations; and strategies which impact directly on students' learning.

This area of the school's work is high quality.

The principal is a highly effective school leader. As the school's founding principal, he clearly communicates the vision to all stakeholders to demonstrate explicitly high expectations for all students' academic achievement. In turn, the administration and faculty continuously focus on school-wide improvement to enhance teaching and learning. All administration decisions are driven by data. For example, the principal uses school-level data to determine, allocate, and maximize resources to ensure that its members have the means to meet their shared goals. The principal has raised the awareness among stakeholders of opportunities for engagement in the school through their participation in a wide variety of forums. The administration provides opportunities throughout the school year for staff, parents and students to participate in and take a lead in decision-making processes such as being members of the school leadership team (SLT). The administration and teachers define the SIP goals, the SLT is expected to monitor and report the progress of actions in addressing the goals. The principal ensures a school culture that supports the development of new leaders, such as the way in which career ladders are established for teaching staff. Meaningful leadership roles are assigned throughout the school and aspiring new leaders receive coaching, mentoring, and advancement opportunities so that aspiring leaders and managers are continually challenged and have opportunities to grow.

The school's priorities are clearly outlined in the SIP. Most SIP goals are measurable, but the plan is not yet sufficiently closely monitored to ascertain the full impact of actions on student learning. All professional development activities are aligned with, and are a part of, the SIP which is embedded into the school calendar; for example, priorities to improve strategies for teaching and supporting EC and LEP students. There has been school-wide training to promote critical thinking at all grade levels to further underpin development of the school's PLC. The administration effectively monitors the quality of teaching and learning through learning walks and the CMS evaluation process. Teachers receive regular feedback in writing, via emails, and through face-to-face debriefs. Members of the administrative team attend departmental meetings and monitor minutes to ensure that teachers follow the pacing guides and to impact teachers' use of data to inform their planning. The involvement of the school leaders in planning has 'raised the bar' in the quality of most department meetings, and has also been empowering for department chairs through supporting them in effectively leading their subject faculty.

Criterion 5: Learning environment

The school has a safe and orderly environment and makes full use of its available resources, including technology, to directly impact student learning.

This area of the school's work is high quality.

The school has established effective safety procedures, and emergency plans are in place to ensure the well-being of all students in the event of a crisis with designated roles and responsibilities clearly defined. A mutually respectful learning environment for students has been established, where there is 'Knights' pride and school-wide identity among adults and students alike. The staff cares for the students and knows them well, and students know and value the school's concern for them. The majority of students is motivated and study hard. The 2008 student attendance rate was 95 percent, which is above state and district averages. Most students understand their achievements and what they need to do to improve as a result of the teachers' high expectations, effective use of rubrics, and advisory conferences with teachers. This process enables students to take responsibility for their own learning and to gain independence.

Behavior in lessons and around the school building is very good. Students know that matters are dealt with by the administration, and they report that behavior matters and concerns are dealt with fairly. Students state that they trust the administration and the school staff. There are low numbers of student disciplinary referrals because generally lessons are challenging and relevant and staff deal with discipline positively. When needed, the school implements positive school-wide behavioral supports and interventions. The school community respects and incorporates the cultures of its members—their values, history, language, experiences, and traditions—in every aspect of school life. Faculty and staff consistently articulate expectation of college attendance for all students. College resources are readily available to students and parents. The school organizes college visits and college fairs. Teachers, parents and community members mentor, counsel and advise students on career and college options with the opportunity for senior students to develop college portfolios.

Criterion 6: Involvement of parents and the community

The school has a range of regular, two-way methods for communicating with parents, guardians and the wider community and takes steps to encourage active engagement in the education of their children and involvement in the life of the school.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The administration ensures open communication among stakeholders. For example, goals for student success are made explicit within the school community through public meetings, open days, matriculation meetings, and the school's publications. The school maintains good communication between home, school, and the wider community through the school website, newsletters, brochures, and press releases. Parents are encouraged to become advocates for their children's education, participate in school activities, and actively engage in making education-related decisions. The school maintains an open-door policy to facilitate communication between parents and school staff. Parents praise the access to information through students' grades online, at quarterly progress reporting periods, and through parent-teacher conferences. A growing number of parents participate in the parent-teacher conferences per year. However, the school has not reached out specifically to under-represented Asian, Hispanic, and African American parents. The school does not have specific family outreach activities for these ethnic groups.

The school maintains partnerships with local organizations, including businesses, community-based organizations and other entities. It has ongoing relationships with school partners, for example bringing community partners into the school. The school is developing fostered linkages between families and local organizations or agencies in order to mobilize community resources based on parents' needs. Community partners provide speakers at special events, such as business-linked courses. Older students participate in service-based projects, such as community services and charity fundraising, occasionally in collaboration with parent supporters.