Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Queens High School of Teaching, Liberal Arts and the Sciences

High School Q566

7420 Commonwealth Boulevard
Queens
NY 11426

Principal: Jae Hyun Cho

Date of review: April 12, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor
The School Context

Queens High School of Teaching, Liberal Arts and the Sciences is a high school with 1118 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 24% Asian, 49% Black, 16% Hispanic, and 9% White students. The student body includes 1% English Language Learners and 20% 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 92.0%.

School Quality Criteria

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

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

**Findings**
Teams of teachers systematically examine their pedagogy and share knowledge and strategies for improving pedagogy and student learning across the school. Distributed leadership structures are evident throughout the school.

**Impact**
All staff members assume responsibility for collectively improving teacher practice and student performance and play an integral role in high-level decisions about student learning schoolwide.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The vast majority of teachers participate in interdisciplinary professional learning activities that allow them to meet regularly with other staff on the respective grade or content team, as well as with intervention specialists and other service providers. The grade teams meet three times per week to engage in activities that include specific focus on a group of approximately 100 target students whom they share. Through “Kid-Talk” and “Critical Friends Group” sessions, team members share student work, lesson plans and instructional strategies to improve both staff and student achievement. In collaboration with staff from the Center for Professional Excellence of Teachers and coaches from the Institute for Student Achievement, teachers also engage in ongoing refinement and revision of lesson plans and units of study.

- During the Quality Review, a literacy team used a “What? So What? Now What?” protocol to examine samples of student work in order to assess the impact of a strategy that they use to teach students how to develop paragraphs. The task required students to use a guided writing template to write a paragraph in which they include a main idea, evidence statements, links between the evidence and main idea, and a concluding statement (MELCON). The team assessed each student’s work, using an argumentative writing rubric and the MELCON template to note features such as evidence of a claim, relevance of the evidence to the claim and use of transition words to connect ideas in the paragraph (the “What?”). They determined that students need additional instruction to accurately connect evidence to claims and connect the topic sentence to the concluding sentence (the “So What?”). Next steps included the inclusion of a bank of transition words and use of bulleting and peer editing in re-teaching to improve student mastery of this skill (the “Now What?”).

- Teachers at the team meetings stated that they provide essential input in school-level decision-making, through peers who meet regularly with school leaders and others to devise and implement strategies for improving teaching and learning. Teacher leaders include the grade level team facilitators and instructional coaches who work with all staff on initiatives that target improved student outcomes. In collaboration with school leaders, they support all teams with instructional resources, data analysis and implementation of next steps to improve student learning and teacher pedagogy. They also set the agenda for the weekly team meetings and facilitate professional learning events for all staff. The principal used bar graphs and charts of comparative analysis of marking period and scholarship data to illustrate how teamwork continues to improve achievement by all students.
Findings
Across classrooms, teaching strategies and academic tasks immerse all students, including students with disabilities, in rigorous work and discussions. However, instructional strategies do not illustrate consistent use of extensions of tasks for students at diverse levels.

Impact
While academic tasks foster higher-order thinking and learning across classrooms, there are missed opportunities to further deepen student learning via completion of tasks that allow all students to demonstrate high levels of ownership of learning.

Supporting Evidence
- In the classrooms visited, teachers provided visual supports and scaffolds for students to be highly engaged in learning. In a grade 9 Living Environment class, the teacher used manipulatives such as scissors, tape, colored paper, strips of paper and a handout with notes about DNA cells to engage students in examining the structure of DNA. Groups of students worked to create a model of a DNA molecule by cutting and arranging the color coded-strips in a manner that illustrated their thinking about DNA cell structure. They discussed how the pieces of paper fit together, made a drawing of their model and answered the questions on the handout. A paraprofessional supported a few students with disabilities who were in the room.

- In most classrooms visited, tasks and lessons facilitated student participation in discussions driven by high-level student-generated questions. In a grade 12 Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, the teacher used a Socratic Seminar approach to engage students in a discussion of storyboards to describe “the biggest problems facing schools today” that they had created after reading. The discussion protocol guided students in taking turns to read their story aloud, pause to answer clarifying questions from peers, listen to feedback from peers, share a reflection on the task and respond to the feedback received. The high level of ownership of learning and engagement of students in peer-to-peer dialogue seen in this classroom, where students created their own focus questions and chose to write stories that connected the topic to their own lives, was not evident in a few other classrooms visited. In one of those classrooms, most students spent the observed period silently trying to complete the assigned task of solving math problems involving number sense.

- In classrooms visited, there was evidence of differentiated tasks or differentiated approaches to tasks for individual or groups of learners. For example, in an Algebra class, groups of students worked on differentiated problems linked to a project on quadratic equations that they have been working on. During the share session the groups highlighted the strategy that they used to solve the problems and showed their graph of the solution. Similarly, in a grade 11 United States History class, students participated in a gallery walk across learning stations with differentiated information about aspects of the Great Depression, in order to rank several given causes of the Great Depression. In these and other classrooms, the tasks involved students responding to teacher-generated learning activities that did not typically offer more advanced students opportunities to tackle higher-level tasks as extensions to curricula.
## Additional Findings

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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### Findings

Curricula strategically aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts offer all students access to highly challenging learning experiences in all disciplines.

### Impact

All students benefit from rigorous curricula that drive coherent instruction across all grades and content areas and promote college and career readiness. High-level tasks enable all students, including students with disabilities, to demonstrate their thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams collaboratively refine curriculum maps and units of study to align all curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and relevant content standards across grades and disciplines. Curricula includes content for advanced placement courses that include United States History, English and statistics and offer students opportunities to complete tasks such as problem-solving in math and writing evidence-based position papers. A Global History task required students to read multiple excerpts of texts to create an argumentative essay with claims, counterclaims and evidence, in response to the question, “Does globalization have a positive or negative effect on our world?” A task for grade 9 students involved a project that required them to create a mini edition of the play *Othello* based on a music video and on their own reading of Shakespeare’s original version of the play.

- Given a school-wide format for curriculum mapping and lesson planning, teachers design curricula that incorporate rigorous tasks grounded in Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* (DOK) tool and *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL) strategies, to address the needs of all students. Unit maps, lesson plans and student work show academic tasks linked to City University of New York (CUNY) curricula and the integration of Regents and College Board Standards to design demanding learning activities. For example, a task for grade 11 students involved researching two technological innovations, describing the old systems that they replaced and reporting on the effects of the new technological inventions on society. Further, during the meeting with students, including students with disabilities, they all referred to projects that involved creating multimedia presentations as part of informational reports across content areas. One student displayed her “College Binder” and described how she used Google Docs to review articles on colleges, analyze sample college essays and then create a draft of a college essay for a class presentation.

- In addition to curricula for all core disciplines, there are curricula and tasks for a Drop Everything and Read program, an advisory program and advanced work in areas such as astronomy, criminology, and film and theatre studies. Curricula also include activities for a Wise Individualized Senior Experience program that offers seniors credits for independent study, including internships aligned to their interests. Curricula also include content for varied college and career readiness initiatives that immerse students in learning about and visiting colleges, and taking college level courses through partnerships with institutions such as St. Johns University, Adelphi, and CUNY colleges. Curricula for a summer program and the school’s own Teaching Institute round out offerings that result in acceptance of many students to top colleges, including Cornell University, as seen on a hallway bulletin board. The principal noted that current data showing 91% of eligible students graduating from the school within four years is largely due to the use of rigorous curricula in all disciplines.
Findings
All teachers use data from multiple assessment tools to create clear portraits of student mastery of skills across all classes. Varied use of ongoing checks for understanding is evident in all classrooms and all students engage in self-assessment.

Impact
Comprehensive and varied assessment practices result in adjustments to curricula and instruction that meet students’ diverse learning needs and generate actionable and meaningful feedback that makes all students well aware of next steps for improved mastery of their learning targets.

Supporting Evidence
- Assessment documents for all content areas include pre-assessments, interim assessments, mid-term and final assessments. Data folders also show that teachers administer collaboratively developed assessments, including mock Regents in all applicable content areas. Further, all teachers use rubrics, student self-assessment, on-demand assessments, and performance tasks aligned to curricula, to assess student mastery of unit goals. Teachers use the data to provide students with individualized feedback via comments with next steps and information circled on the applicable rubric. During the meeting with students, they all described how they use rubrics and teacher feedback to improve their work. All students also stated that they go online to look at their performance data on PupilPath and self-assess every day because teachers conference regularly with them about assignments and scores.

- Using data from all assessments, teachers create profiles of student weaknesses and strengths across grades and subjects. A College Readiness Tracker provides a comprehensive report on student scores and documents their growth across assessments administered each term. Students use goal sheets and a tracking log in their portfolios to track their own progress and chart next steps on a “Student Progress Sheet/Action Plan” document. Teacher use of data to form or adjust student groupings for instruction is evident in lesson plans. Other adjustments, based on detected student needs, include teachers working with students on re-taking assessments to improve the level of mastery attained initially and providing students with additional skills building time through intervention initiatives that target their needs.

- In classrooms visited, all teachers were observed using varied forms of checks for understanding such as beginning, middle and/or end of lesson reviews, use of focus questions outlined on lesson plans, individual and small group conferencing, group and partner share outs, exit tickets and hand signals. Many teachers follow up immediately on findings. In a grade 10 class where students were analyzing a poem by Robert Frost, after checking in on group work, the teacher kept reminding students to, “annotate first and then do analysis; I don’t see much annotation.” Further, using findings from inquiry work and formative assessments, teachers adjust curricula to build student mastery of the skills and content involved. For example, based on assessment data that showed gaps in the Integrated Algebra curriculum, the teachers created a separate unit with content and tasks related to exponential functions.
Findings
Staff members systematically communicate to students and families, a well-defined and uniform set of high expectations for all students to be college and career ready, with multiple supports and structures that help move all students towards success in meeting the expectations.

Impact
The school’s culture for learning creates strong partnerships with students and families, contributing to a deep understanding of school goals and expectations for all students and resulting in students mastering expectations for advancement to their next academic level.

Supporting Evidence
- All staff members use tools such as a newsletter, emails, progress reports and texts, to communicate high expectations to all students and families. Additionally, through meetings with guidance counselors and other staff, families receive information about the progress of their children and ways to support the college preparation process. Families stated that through workshops, curriculum presentations, scholarship reports, data on PupilPath, and welcome letters with course guidelines and expectations, they know what they need to do to help prepare their children for college and beyond. One mentioned that families pushed for the addition of advanced placement courses for college readiness and the principal followed-up. Another parent described a “Secondary Options Night” and a College Now presentation, where students and parents received guidance about financial aid, the college application process and support for Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) preparation work.

- All teachers monitor and analyze student performance data and share the information with students, keeping each one aware of the progress being made in relation to expectations such as consistent progress in credit accumulation and satisfactory progress towards graduation. Through meetings with guidance staff and advisory teachers, who conduct reviews of scholarship reports and transcripts after every marking period, students track their own progress and follow-up on next steps for their academic growth. Further, after each marking period teachers pull out struggling students for individualized work in intervention programs that hold the students accountable for collaborating with teachers to improve their grades. Counselors and advisory teachers also facilitate information sessions for all students and, through the College Office’s online portal, students are well-supported in taking the initiative in discovering the many opportunities and experiences designed to equip them for success in college and careers.

- During the meeting with students, several of them outlined ways in which they gain information and guidance to be well prepared for their next level. They noted that staff members advise them and their families about college trips, college fairs and preparation and application steps for college admission. They stated that all juniors and seniors receive assistance in completing on-line college applications, filing for financial aid, researching college programs, and enrolling in a college. Guidance counselors and advisory teachers also structure activities that expose first year students to the college application process. The CUNY at Home in College initiative offers math and English courses to prepare students for CUNY exams and many students participate in College Now courses through the school’s partnerships with institutions such as St. Johns, Adelphi, and Queens College. Graduation tracking records show increasingly higher levels of scholarship and scholarship awards of over six million dollars, to date, for graduating seniors.