The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Celebration to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Focus to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as Additional Finding. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

Queens Academy High School serves students in grade 10 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<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 Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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 Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Quality Ratings continued

#### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<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 Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

School leaders at both campuses of this transfer high school frequently observe teachers to provide feedback on their pedagogy. This feedback highlights strong practices and illustrates steps to be taken to improve.

Impact

Teachers, including new teachers, are supported as they develop and improve their skills and grow as professionals.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader determined that the skills and expertise of two assistant principals would be utilized most effectively by assigning one of them to support the differing needs of the teachers and students at each of the two sites of this transfer high school. There are six rounds of observations that include written feedback and post-observation conferences. The principal and assistant principals meet with teachers during pre- and post-observation conferences to review the evidence from informal and formal walkthroughs and to look at student work to determine achievement. The focus of the discussions is on what students are being asked to do during the lesson. One teacher indicated that school leaders deliver verbal feedback immediately following observations, but that written feedback is sometimes delayed.

- School leaders develop a schedule for conducting observations so that in addition to the observations conducted by the assistant principals, the principal observes each teacher at least once each term. All school leaders norm observation practices through jointly conducted classroom visits after which they share the results with each other in order to agree on the feedback that should be provided. They also identify common needs for future professional development, which they believe should be planned in collaboration with the teachers.

- Written feedback to teachers incorporates specific suggestions for improving pedagogical skills, such as including detailed open-ended questions in the lesson plan or ensuring that students are citing text evidence during share-out sessions with partners or small groups. In some cases, the school leader provided resources for the teacher to use, such as an article on the role of the teacher as a facilitator of discussion in a lesson. Feedback in one observation urged the teacher to use more turn and talk opportunities to increase student engagement, which is one of the articulated goals of the school. One observation included an area of celebration dealing with high levels of student engagement in group work and commended the teacher for providing cognitively challenging tasks that “provided students the opportunity to use tactile skills.”
Findings
Teachers inconsistently provide multiple and varied strategies to engage students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, in challenging tasks.

Impact
There is uneven demonstration of thinking and participation in high-level discussions. Not all students produce work products that reflect high levels of rigor.

Supporting Evidence
- In some classes students engaged in high-level discussions and tasks, but this was not the case in the majority of classes visited. For example, students in one lesson were working in groups to explore the impact of the Industrial Revolution and, in another, they were writing two-column proofs and using a protocol to quiz each other. In one class students held a rigorous discussion based on student-selected quotes from *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. Although students were engaged in the activity, the conversation was teacher directed with missed opportunities for student-to-student discussion to demonstrate their own learning.

- Often the lessons were teacher centered with the conversation characterized by teacher-student-teacher interaction. In a science class, the responses of the few students who were participating in the discussion were guesses about the impact of diets high in sugar on blood sugar levels. Students did not refer to notes or texts and were not pushed to reference research to support their speculations. As a result, not all students were required to demonstrate their learning in a meaningful way.

- Some lessons did not clearly align the tasks that students were asked to perform with the essential question. For example, the essential question in one lesson was "How did the golden age of Islam affect us today?" Students were asked to write about "how other cultures contributed to our own" based on several texts that explained the contribution of Islamic scholars to math, science, and medicine. However, students interpreted the prompt to mean a discussion of how American society was built by overtaking other cultures, thus limiting the development of the essential question on the diffusion of Islamic scholarship and scientific advances.

- Some student work products reflect engagement in challenging tasks. For example, in one class students were highly engaged in hypothesizing about the interpretation of blood spatters in order to solve a crime. Students used academic terms such as velocity, pooling, and cast-off arc to describe what they were observing as they imagined the possible reconstruction of a crime scene. In another class, students formed literature groups around a book they chose to read and discuss with one another. The student-led groups made charts with key ideas and open-ended questions about the characters in the book to guide the presentation they would later make to the whole class.

- One piece of student work included a letter written by the student to the class explaining in detail the process for finding the midpoint of a line segment. The letter, prompted by an error the student made in a similar problem on a test, demonstrated his mastery of the skill.
**Additional Finding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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**Findings**

Teachers and leaders at both sites are aligning curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and to the needs of transfer high school students. Lessons and units of study are beginning to emphasize rigorous habits.

**Impact**

Lessons inconsistently incorporate the instructional shifts that promote the higher-order skills needed to be college and career ready.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers review each other’s lesson plans for alignment to the Common Core with particular attention to task development and the alignment of tasks with formative and summative assessments. Some but not all lesson plans explicitly reference the standards and have learning objectives and tasks that align with those standards. Some lesson plans do not reference any standards, but might include tasks that incorporate instructional shifts, such as drawing inferences or citing from the text to support a claim.

- Teachers are using a variety of curricular materials to meet the needs of ELLs as well as a large and growing population of transfer students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Teachers identified students who are struggling with language acquisition to use an online reading program specifically designed to develop English literacy skills.

- Some teachers plan lessons to include differentiation strategies for students with diverse learning styles. For example, one lesson plan recognizes that some students may benefit from having images included with the text in document-based questions or that they might utilize additional time to complete an exit ticket by taking the assignment home. A lesson plan to develop critical thinking skills tiered students and matched them with tasks that had differing levels of supports and scaffolds.

- In one lesson plan, students were explicitly identified for additional support, such as individualized step-by-step instruction. However, in most lesson plans, differentiation strategies, when they were explained, were generic and not specific to individual students. For example, one plan indicated that grouping students heterogeneously would be the strategy used to provide access to the curricula for ELLs and students with disabilities.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Teachers create and use rubrics and are developing common assessments that are aligned to the curricula.

Impact

Students receive limited feedback on their work and teachers do not always analyze student achievement in order to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Some teachers use task specific rubrics to assess the final version of assignments. Teachers created and use an argumentative writing rubric that outlines requirements for the first draft and for the revised version in which students are expected to make corrections for logic and make sure they have used transition words. One lesson plan included a roundtable discussion rubric which evaluates student discussion on how well it evidences critical thinking and argumentation strategies. Students indicated they use rubrics in some subjects and that using them helps them to organize their thoughts.

- Currently, each teacher determines an individual grading policy and some teachers indicated they are in the process of developing a universal grading policy for the school. Students explained that they get points toward their report card grade for participation. However, no formal system for recording those points was observed in any class. In a class in which only half of the students had attempted to complete the do now, one teacher explained that he would remember to record the participation points at a later time in the online grading system, Skedula. As a result, students do not always know how their grades are determined.

- Teachers are in the process of creating schoolwide baseline diagnostic assessments in English Language Arts and math. While individual teachers collect information about student performance, there is no commonly used system to track assessment data across grades and content areas to inform adjustments to the curricula.

- Teachers create tests that are modeled on Regents exams in order to prepare students for success on exams they may have previously struggled to pass. Students in one class completed a task modeled on the tasks often included in history Regents exams in which they had to analyze data in a chart to answer questions about the effects of industrialization on the United States after the Civil War.
Findings

Communications from the school leaders across both campuses reinforce the expectations for teachers outlined in the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Young adult students are consistently expected to strive for post-secondary educational or career opportunities.

Impact

School leaders hold teachers accountable for expectations of professional practice and provide training on how to meet those expectations. Students are supported by guidance and advisement as they prepare for college and career.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders reinforce high expectations for instruction and professionalism in weekly newsletters. One recent newsletter explained the importance of improving questioning and discussion techniques noting, “Remember well planned and thought-out questions will ultimately lead to robust high level student to student discourse in the classroom.” In the same newsletter, teachers were encouraged to explore alternative methods for providing second opportunities for students to complete assignments, such as in-class writing tasks. In addition to allowing students to demonstrate mastery of the course material, such assignments also serve to “help them prepare for the rigors of college.”

- Professional development is provided to ensure that all staff members are aware of and support the high expectations established by school leaders. For example, several opportunities focused on how to meet the needs outlined in the IEPs of newly enrolled students, specifically on the difference between compliance with regulations and differentiating instruction.

- Young adult students, who transfer to this school from other high schools, are informed of expectations about graduation during the interview and orientation program. Transcripts and IEPs are reviewed and a program is developed for each student to fulfill as many requirements for graduation as possible. Students expressed the confidence they have in their ability to succeed and their determination to graduate with a diploma. Several students indicated that they are taught to voice their opinions and support them with facts; a skill that they believe will help them to be prepared for jobs and college.

- School leaders express the vision that all students will be ready for success at any two- or four-year institution of higher learning. One student said one of the teachers helped prepare students to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test and encourages them to apply to college. The guidance department organizes fairs on both campuses and visits to colleges such as Hofstra and City and State university campuses. In addition, the department supports students in pursuing civil service careers with the Fire Department of the City of New York, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and other agencies. Students indicate that the guidance department helps them identify and apply to colleges. One student spoke about her interest in attending a college with a strong performing arts program.

- While 64 percent of students who enroll in this school are over-aged and under-credited, 26 percent of students successfully completed college and career prep courses or exams in 2016.
**Additional Finding**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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</table>

**Findings**

Collaborative teaching teams are not yet consistently analyzing assessment results and student work. Teachers support each other and are developing leadership roles at the same time.

**Impact**

Teacher practice is beginning to improve as a result of collaborative teamwork and teachers are beginning to be involved in decisions that affect student learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- While teachers collaborate on interdisciplinary inquiry and planning teams, they do not consistently and routinely analyze aggregated student performance data. Teachers on one team discussed the purpose of assessments with a focus on how they can be used to adjust curricula, and to inform students about what they know and what they need to learn. They discussed several strategies to increase opportunities to conference with students about their levels of achievement and some agreed to try conferencing with individual students while other students engage in self-directed tasks and others determined they could use the advisory periods to meet with specific students.

- This team also read an article and discussed ways to encourage students to engage in metacognitive reflection on their learning. The team determined that they would introduce this article during the advisory period. A team of teachers completed a geometry task as if they were students and then followed their own test correction protocol to assess their own work in order to refine their task development and assessment procedures.

- Some teachers take on expanded roles by facilitating professional learning sessions. For example, some teachers attended training sessions provided by central support staff on developing behavior intervention plans and turnkeyed the training for teachers on both campuses. Teachers participate in the Transfer School Common Core Institute in which they attend site visits at partner schools to observe model practices to consider implementing in their own lessons.