Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Queens Vocational And Technical High School

High school 24Q600

37-02 47 Avenue
Queens
NY 11101

Principal: Melissa Burg

Dates of Review:
October 31, 2017 - November 1, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Rosemary Stuart
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 Vocational And Technical High School serves students in grade 9 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

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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 Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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>Proficient</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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>Proficient</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</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>Proficient</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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for professionalism to teachers. Teachers clearly outline expectations for students in each small learning community (SLC) to graduate with Career and Technical Education (CTE) endorsed Regents diplomas.

Impact

All stakeholders hold themselves accountable for students meeting expectations of college and career readiness and provide guidance and support to prepare students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders outline expectations for professionalism in the Teachers’ Handbook, which includes a calendar of professional learning opportunities in addition to outlining expectations regarding how student performance should be evaluated and reported. All members of the school community hold each other accountable for high expectations through a community contract agreeing, among other things, to “prepare and teach meaningful lessons which prepare students to meet course and graduation requirements.” Feedback to a teacher from a school leader on one informal class visit noted that the teacher had implemented a recommendation to schedule student presentations rather than rely on volunteers. A different teacher was informed that the school leader expected to see evidence of implementation of a recommendation on a future visit. School leaders and teachers review the results of industry-administered technical assessments with respect to expectations for student progress.

- Students enrolled in CTE certificate programs are expected to earn additional credits in their major and are required to have 60 hours of work-based learning experiences. The expectations and requirements to earn a diploma are explicitly communicated to students and their families at high school recruiting fairs, open houses, and orientations for incoming students. The school has assigned staff to assist students in obtaining working papers and resources for obtaining their work-based learning goals. One course syllabus outlines the expectation that students who do not achieve a score of 70 or better on the associated Regents exam, will automatically be signed up to retake it.

- The Survival Guide, a handbook for freshmen, gives helpful hints and suggestions for a successful transition to high school, “straight from the minds of high school seniors.” The advice includes how to manage time, use the school agenda to avoid procrastination, and choose classes and activities that will broaden horizons. One quick tip for academic success urges students to think of school as a job, “Successful adults treat their jobs as one of their top priorities and you need to do the same!”

- SLCs provide the primary form of support and guidance for students. For example, the School of Exploration and Discovery, the ninth-grade SLC, requires its students to sign a community contract that addresses respect, integrity, and responsibility. Each student agrees to “accept responsibility for my own learning.” Each SLC has a guidance department to support students in meeting graduation requirements. From 2015 to 2017, the percent of students graduating from this school ready for the demands of college courses increased from 39 percent to 51 percent, significantly higher than the citywide average of 37 percent.
Findings
While teaching practices and questioning techniques in CTE certification courses provide multiple entry points into the learning and discourse, they are not consistent across all grades and subjects.

Impact
Student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of rigor and not all students demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- Questioning techniques across classrooms unevenly reflected higher-order thinking skills and there were missed opportunities for teachers to require higher-order thinking in responses. In a lesson on interpreting and summarizing information from graphs and charts, the teacher asked where information regarding drunk driving deaths would be available and accepted the one-word answer, “hospitals,” with no evidence from the graph to support this claim. In contrast, during a social studies lesson, students debated whether Napoleon was a hero or a villain and defended their claim with evidence from the texts. One student commented that, “Napoleon feels superior to the Pope and the church” and cited an image of Napoleon crowning himself. In another lesson on the topic of nationalism, the teacher asked students to cite evidence from a source to answer the question, “Does nationalism unite or divide people?” and proceeded to answer the question himself.

- Some lessons provided activities that were differentiated by content, process, or product. Students in a cosmetology lab were practicing for State licensing practical exams using their own mannequins and followed detailed descriptions of the required task to produce a unique demonstration of their abilities. Students in another course were drawing individual plans and diagrams of an electrical installation. In other classes, however, this level of differentiation was not common across content areas and grades.

- In some classes, the discussions were teacher-centered and there were uneven levels of rigorous conversation. For example, in one class, students conducted a lively debate on the death penalty. In another lesson for English Language Learners (ELLs) on identifying the central idea in a text, students used academic vocabulary to discuss an excerpt from Life on the Mississippi by Mark Twain. One student cited evidence that the author of the memoir had “obtained an understanding of the river and acquired a different perspective.” However, in some instances, teachers directed the discussion, thereby reducing the opportunity for rich student-to-student interaction.
### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to State and industry-level standards for CTE programs. Rigorous tasks are planned for all students.

### Impact

Curricula, especially in CTE courses, promote college and career readiness and emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills across grades and subjects and for ELLs and students with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

- Students in CTE courses prepare for certification in eight State approved programs, such as electrical engineering, cosmetology, graphic arts, and computer networking. In an engineering course, rigorous tasks include designing and then soldering circuit boards. A computer networking lesson plan addresses the skills students will need to take the Cisco certification exam. The school offers college credit courses on-site and through LaGuardia Community College. This year, three new Advanced Placement courses were offered.

- The school offers courses specifically designed to support students who have not attained college ready performance through Lessons in Navigating College Transitions (LINCT) in partnership with The City University of New York (CUNY). A lesson plan for students who have not reached proficiency on a math Regents exam outlines an interactive game to deepen understanding of the concepts of percent increase or decrease. The focus of the lesson is on helping students to work meaningfully with scale factors, not merely to memorize the algorithm.

- One teacher prepared a lesson for an integrated co-teaching (ICT) class on interpreting topographic maps to understand the landscape of an area. The task directions include a reminder to draw the contour lines at an interval value that will show detail in elevation but still be practical. The plan for the lesson purposefully selects groups of students and provides increasingly complex tasks and material with varied scaffolds for each group. A plan for an English lesson outlines supports for ELLs to be provided by the English as a New Language co-teacher. The lesson plan addresses Common Core standards related to demonstrating command of formal English and incorporates strategies for vocabulary building, including visual, audio, and scaffolded graphic organizers.

- Most lesson plans reference relevant standards, incorporate the instructional shifts, and include aligned tasks. An algebra lesson plan references standards related to polynomial expressions and includes tasks on writing functions from roots and multiplicities. The plan also references the real-life application of polynomial functions to the design of roller coasters. School leaders review curricular materials and offer guidance and suggestions for improvements. An assistant principal asked teachers in one department to outline more clearly in the unit plan how they will monitor class participation, which is an element of their grading policy, and to explain that work collected during lessons would be evaluated for accuracy, not only completion.
### Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

#### Findings

Teachers create periodic assessments, content-specific rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the curriculum in each CTE major. Teachers analyze common assessments by department.

#### Impact

Teachers provide actionable feedback to help students improve performance and use their analysis of performance to revise curricula and instruction.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Rubrics, in many cases specific to the tasks, are commonly used by teachers to evaluate student work, and by students to guide them in achieving high-quality work products. A rubric for a computer repair task described the qualities of excellent soldering while the skilled building trades rubric for an electrical installation outlined important elements of the project, such as accurate measurements to locate the panels according to job specifications. One teacher used a scoring rubric for discussions during a debate. This rubric clearly outlined how students earn points for expanding on a previous statement or counter an argument with evidence. The rubric also showed that students who repeat a previously mentioned comment would not get additional points and students who dominate the conversation or speak out of turn would lose points.

- One student explained that rubrics and grades are important components of his learning process, and added, “The feedback I get matters to me.” A teacher commended a student for using the subjunctive mood in an essay about the choreographer, George Balanchine, and added a compliment about the use of metaphor, “Like the dancers George was in search of, I, too, live solely to express myself.” When a student gave a one-word answer to a question on a lab assignment, the teacher awarded half credit and reminded the student to “write in complete sentences with an explanation.” Some feedback to students was provided by identifying the levels of performance for multiple criteria on a rubric, for example, by circling the description of the work associated with a particular point value.

- Teachers use items from prior Regents exams as activities in lessons to expose students to the types of questions that they may encounter on the exams and to give them opportunities to become familiar with the scoring rubrics. One teacher used a map from a recent Regents High School Examination in Global History and Geography in a lesson about seventh-century trade routes. Other teachers used topics of current interest to engage students. A quiz in a history class asked students to explain the ramifications on the First Amendment of a dress code for employees of a clothing store that prohibited wearing a hijab.

- Teachers administer diagnostic assessments to determine pre-instructional levels of knowledge and skills. School leaders guide them in creating, administering, and analyzing these assessments, as well as formative, benchmark, and summative assessments. To inform adjustments to instruction, departments create common mid-year and end-of-year exams and develop a yearly calendar for administering them.

- The analysis of results of a ninth-grade diagnostic assessment in English Language Arts (ELA) indicated that students were not able to distinguish between the central idea and a summary of the text. The teachers determined that they would revise lesson plans to include explicit instruction on writing strategies on identifying central idea and avoiding too much summarizing.
Additional Finding

**Quality Indicator:** 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision

**Rating:** Developing

### Findings

Feedback to teachers in each SLC addresses performance using some components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. School leaders are in the process of implementing a consistent professional development (PD) program.

### Impact

Feedback to teachers unevenly supports teacher development. Professional learning is beginning to address the issues surfaced in observations of teacher practice.

### Supporting Evidence

- Feedback capturing strengths and areas for improvement in teacher performance is unevenly included in observation reports from school leaders, including directors of each SLC. One teacher was commended for preparing a packet of materials outlining strategies for success on Regents exams. The school leader added that this material will reduce test anxiety and help students “to use their time effectively and ultimately serve to increase their test scores.” A suggestion for improvement for another teacher recommended that she develop specific supports, such as vocabulary prompts, to support language acquisition for ELLs. Feedback in some observations was limited and did not provide actionable next steps.

- Observation feedback addresses a few of the components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, such as using questioning and discussion techniques or engaging students in learning. Although school leaders give feedback to teachers and departments on curricular materials, of the 18 reviewed observation reports, only six of them provided feedback on designing coherent instruction. In one report, the teacher received a rating of developing for this component. Additional feedback recommended that learning objectives be “framed in language that lends itself to measurement.” Another teacher, rated highly effective in this component, received feedback commending the choices provided to students and the coherent alignment of the learning activities and instructional goals.

- Observation reports indicate a need for teachers to increase student engagement, particularly pertaining to student-to-student interaction and discourse. School leaders offered PD opportunities, in alignment with school goals, on culturally relevant education focused on developing “teaching and learning strategies that are culturally responsive and human centered.” The principal recently decided to reorganize the delivery of PD with the goal of strengthening the coherence of instruction across all SLCs and departments by assigning one assistant principal to coordinate professional learning.
**Additional Finding**

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: | Proficient |

**Findings**

All teachers in each SLC engage in protocol-driven professional inquiry-based collaborations in which they consistently analyze student work and data on student performance.

**Impact**

Teachers improve their instructional practices and promote the achievement of school and student learning goals.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers have common planning periods several times a week within their departments, enabling collaborative teams, including special education and English as New Language (ENL) teachers, to revise curricula and syllabi. In anticipation of the transition to new social studies content standards and a revised Global History Regents Exam, the social studies department has begun to revise curricula. As a result of analyzing student achievement on social studies Regents exams, the department decided to reverse the sequence of programming so that students take Global History during the first two years of high school and then take the Regents High School Examination in United States History and Government in grade eleven.

- Teachers use an Atlas protocol to analyze student work as they identify implications for classroom practice. Social studies teachers looked at essays on the characteristics of advanced civilizations from a unit on Mesopotamia. Teachers used the protocol to note when students were able to make connections, use transitional phrases, or cite evidence and details. They noted that one student had not included details from the text and had made some spelling and vocabulary errors. They identified several instructional strategies to implement in their lessons, including modeling how to write a topic sentence and providing word walls with relevant vocabulary.

- Teachers indicated that collaborating on teams helps them to identify issues across grades and content areas. For example, math, ELA, ENL, and CTE teachers indicated that developing academic and industry specific vocabulary is a common issue for many students and that sharing strategies helps them improve instruction. Teachers also agreed that working on projects has helped students to develop the skills they will need to be successful in technical careers. An analysis of the results on the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) Cosmetology test shows that 100 percent of the students passed the written portion and 80 percent passed the practical portion. Similarly, ninety-six percent of students passed the NOCTI Virtual Enterprise written test.