Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Queens High School for The Sciences
At York College

High school 28Q687
94-50 159 Street
Queens
NY 11433

Principal: Ana De Jesus

Dates of Review:
February 1, 2018 - February 2, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Carlos Perez
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 High School For The Sciences At York College 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1</strong> 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><strong>1.2</strong> 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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.2</strong> 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>
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</tbody>
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## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 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>Well Developed</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>
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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>Well Developed</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>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>Area of Focus</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 connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching to support all staff. All staff members effectively communicate expectations connected to student academic progress and college and career readiness to all families.

Impact
A culture of mutual accountability and a partnership with parents results in the entire school community taking ownership for all expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Expectations are established and discussed at the beginning of the year and school leaders continue to communicate high expectations to staff through daily instructional walkthroughs and the formal observation process. In addition, as teachers submit their unit and lesson plans via the school's GoogleDrive platform, school leaders are able to offer feedback to assure that there is alignment to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the school's instructional focus. High expectations and standards for teaching are also communicated through professional development cycles of learning such as when the staff analyzed the Danielson's Framework for Teaching, and used that information to look at curricula planning, agreeing that writing was something that needed a stronger presence in the curricula. Consequently, staff members developed writing strategies to be implemented across all grades and subject areas. More opportunities to provide teacher-to-teacher professional learning to support the instructional focus continues to be a goal for the school administration. As a result, there is greater curricular cohesion and an increase in teachers rated effective or highly effective in Advance this year.

- School leaders have set up a Remind app account for every grade level, which allows staff to send out grade specific messages to all families, in addition to the principal's monthly parent newsletter. All parents reported how they consistently receive information with respect to their children's academic and social progress and that the school offers numerous opportunities for families to interact and communicate with teachers and learn about instructional expectations. These efforts include text messages, emails, phone calls, letters, curriculum nights, fall and spring parent teacher conferences, college application workshops, college financial aid application workshops, career day, and college fairs. Parents also completed a survey at the beginning of the year and it was noted how they wanted more ways to help with test anxiety. As a result, three separate workshops entitled “Helping your Child Deal with Stress and Anxiety” are a part of this year's school calendar. Further, all parents indicated that the school has “extremely high” expectations that start with the school's belief that all students should be graduating with an advanced Regents diploma. In these ways, school leaders and staff have created successful partnerships with families to support student progress.

- The principal communicates high expectations to all staff via weekly updates. The weekly update dated November 27, 2017 reminded teachers of the expectations associated with uploading unit maps onto the school's Google Drive, and how unit maps must be available for all observations. In addition, staff were informed of three different teachers who would be delivering lessons as part of the school's lesson study program. The principal urged teachers to take part in the observation if they were available. Through the creation and sharing of instructional resources, teachers have created a culture of mutual accountability for curricula and instruction.
Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations that analyze student work products, assessment results, and pedagogical practices.

Impact

While there is collaborative planning and schoolwide instructional coherence, increased student mastery for specific groups of students is in the process of emerging.

Supporting Evidence

- Both teachers and school leaders believe that there has been a big impact on teachers’ instructional capacity because of the teacher teamwork throughout the school. Over the past year, teachers reported “much more collaboration and respect” between colleagues, leading to teachers sharing strategies across subjects and grade levels. During the meeting with school leaders, they reported seeing “much more teacher adjustments to lessons” by implementing strategies that other teachers use in different grades and subject areas, as learned during team meetings. Teacher collaboration has also led to the implementation of the lesson study initiative throughout the school. Groups of teachers sit together and offer feedback to one another on lesson plans, the elements of the lesson, and steps to improve future lessons. In addition, teachers have created a rubric that is used during the lesson study. During the meeting with teachers one teacher stated, and all others agreed, how they have seen an improvement in their pedagogy through the observations and lesson studies this year.

- To track student progress towards goals, teachers meet regularly and discuss the students they share across all content areas. Teachers use a data driven action plan template in order to note what students are doing well and in what areas they need to continue to work. In addition, the action plan identified areas that needed additional support, thus teachers implement strategies that address those areas of concern. Teachers explained that during these meetings, student goals are adjusted or changed based on the progress they have made and the amount of time left in a particular unit. However, assessment information is not used adequately so that groups of students are showing increased mastery towards goals for groups of students.

- Teachers evaluate student work products regularly using the Analysis of Student Work tuning protocol. During the Quality Review, the teacher meeting was structured in a way that allowed one teacher to present various examples of student writing that analyzed three Greek philosophers as a way to better understand rationalism in ancient Greece and compare Greek philosophy with the beliefs of ancient China. Teachers examined the student writing and offered warm and cool feedback. However, at times, the presenting teacher refocused the group when they were not following the protocol. Warm feedback included how students used academic vocabulary and cited text-based evidence. Cool feedback included how some students simply listed ideas and did not fully analyze and compare the two societies. Next steps included offering students graphic organizers that had specific areas for students to compare and contrast the two societies. Although many teachers meet in teacher teams and use protocols to reflect on their practices, a few teams have yet to collaboratively use the inquiry process to deepen their understanding of best instructional practices.
**Additional Finding**

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

There is curricular coherence and alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards (Common Core), such as writing across the curriculum. Rigorous tasks and higher order thinking for all students is emphasized throughout.

**Impact**

Rigorous tasks and access to the curriculum for all students result in students being able to demonstrate their thinking and be cognitively engaged.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leadership shared how writing is an area that has been given a strong focus this year, and “something that should be seen in all planning documents.” A physics lesson plan incorporated writing by asking students to describe how an electroscope works and to explain in detail what the new charge of a neutral balloon would be after it loses 50 electrons. Other planning that evidence writing throughout included do now assignments that require students to write down responses and revise them when needed. A social studies lesson plan included students watching a video excerpt from *All Quiet on the Western Front* and required to write down all of the tactics that were used in order to motivate the young men to join the war effort. An English Language Arts lesson plan requires students to do extensive writing in order to analyze and explain how “Thomas Pynchon uses art to orientate the readers experience,” and align it to that of his postmodern protagonist, Oedipa Maas. These rigorous activities, aligned to the standards, challenge students’ thinking and as a result the school has seen a rise in the number of students taking advance placement courses this year.

- Planning for all students, including English Language Learners, (ELLs), and students with disabilities, to engage in rigorous group work, conversations and writing activities was seen throughout many of the lesson plans reviewed. An English Language Arts, (ELA), lesson plan detailed the accountable talk stem handouts to be used during the lesson in order to help facilitate student discussion. A social studies lesson plan grouped students for a collaborative discussion activity based on varied skills in order for students to support each other. The lesson plan included a graphic organizer for students to document their responses as well as discussion protocols to use during the activity. Several lesson plans evidenced the use of graphic organizers for use by all students to organize their information prior to constructing a written response.

- A math lesson addressed the Common Core standards by having students prove theorems about triangles while first engaging in group discussions. The lesson included planning so that students would persevere through and make sense of problems, make real-world connections to the circumcenter, in center, and centroid of a triangle as well as connecting the lesson to prior knowledge. The lesson plan included academic vocabulary students would need, planning for possible student misconceptions and a variety of formative assessment tools to gauge student learning. A chemistry lesson plan included a cooperative learning guided activity in order for students to engage in conversations to answer questions from a kinetics and thermodynamics PowerPoint presented by the teacher. An Advance Placement (AP) ELA lesson plan included planning for students to engage in group conversations for them to express their understanding of Emerson’s ideas and beliefs about education.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Teaching practices across classroom are aligned to the school’s belief about how students learn best, most notably through active student discussion and collaborative activities. Teaching strategies consistently provide entry points into the curricula.

Impact

All students demonstrate high levels of thinking and participation and as a result produce meaningful student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Students engaging in collaborative activities is one of the ways staff believe students learn best. During an AP World History class, students collaborate regularly in group discussions in order to discover how the decline of the Ottoman Empire changed the dynamics of power in Europe and the Middle East. Students led discussions to answer three questions pertaining to the fall of the Ottoman Empire, politics and economics of the Ottoman Empire, Islamic decline, and nationalism. When answering questions, students cited text-based evidence and infused academic vocabulary into their responses. During a math lesson, students worked in groups of four and answered one question with four different parts. Students decided amongst themselves who would take each question. After each member of the group completed their question, they passed the paper to a second member who checked the prior student’s work and then completed their own section. During this lesson, students actively collaborated and discussed their work.

- Teaching strategies provided multiple entry points into the curricula to engage all learners in challenging tasks. For examples, prompts to support student thinking to use academic language and engage in a high level thinking discussion were seen throughout, thus engaging all students in tasks that result in higher level thinking. Similarly, in an AP ELA class, students worked in different groups to use close readings and annotation strategies to analyze a complex set of ideas and explain how those ideas interact over the course of a text. Groups were overheard using accountable talk stems, using technology in order to perform research, and collaborating in real-time using GoogleDocs. Other entry points into this lesson included a variety of Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions that engaged all learners in active discussion.

- Evidence of collaborative student work was seen across classes. During an honors ELA class, students worked with partners to develop articulate and clear responses to how the values and ideas of the American modernism and postmodernism are evident in American art. Student responses evidenced connections to prior learning, texts, and were supported with clear statements and facts. A science experiment also engaged students cognitively and collaboratively. Via partner work students looked to investigate the effect of activated carbon from organic and inorganic cabbage cores on the removal of methylene blue. Students followed a detailed experiment protocol and documented their findings, “Overall, the activated carbon absorbed 15.56 percent more dye than the inorganic activated carbon.” Thus supporting the students’ hypothesis.
### Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment

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#### Findings

Across classrooms teachers use assessment and rubrics that are aligned to the school’s curricula. Teacher’s assessment practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

#### Impact

Teachers provide students with actionable feedback that identifies strengths and offers next steps. Teachers are regularly making adjustments in order to meet the needs of all learners.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Throughout classrooms visited, teachers’ assessment practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding. For example, during a social studies lesson, the teacher used a checklist and circulated to each student group as students engaged in active discussions. As students were engaged, the teacher would ask questions pertaining to what was heard. For example, one student stated “As the Ottoman Empire fell, it allowed other countries to come in and conquer lands.” The teacher asked the students in the group if they agreed, and if so, why. The teacher also asked the student who made the statement to offer the group an example from the text to support his claim. During the meeting with teachers, teachers shared how they take the data they collect during student conferences and use it to adjust instruction and plan for future lessons.

- Feedback to students reviewed was actionable and offered timely clear next steps. For example, feedback to a student’s narrative writing assignment commended that student on how his analysis was thorough and the images were clear and connected to the student’s explanation. The teacher offered next steps that included reminding the student that he needed to write more than one paragraph and to “be mindful of organization and subject verb agreement.” During the meeting with students they shared how usually when they get assignments back from the teacher “there are always notes that say how we can improve and what we did well.” Another student explained how during the music class the students not only get regular feedback from the teacher, but they receive feedback from student peers as well.

- Ongoing checks for understanding varied across all classrooms visited. Many of the classrooms used exit slips as a way to gauge whether or not students understood materials successfully. Other classrooms used thumbs up and thumbs down in addition to allowing students to peer and self-assess each other. During the meeting with students, all students explained how self-assessment opportunities is something that happens across most of their classes. Students feel that self-assessments is valuable as it “allows us to make sure that we included everything needed in order to get as high a grade as possible.” Students also found the peer assessment opportunities just as helpful. They felt that having “another set of eyes” reviewing their work and offering them feedback prior to handing it in is helpful.
### Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Proficient |

#### Findings

School leaders support all teachers with effective feedback from frequent cycle of observations. Feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges and offers actionable next steps.

#### Impact

Feedback to teachers articulates clear expectations and helps to elevate schoolwide instructional practices and supports teacher development.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers feel supported in a variety of ways towards their development and growth as pedagogues. PD is a big part of the support teachers receive. A PD team is made up of teachers from each department. School leaders work closely with the team to design PD that is directly connected to the feedback offered to teachers through the observation process. Teachers also explained how they are encouraged to attend off-site PD with the expectation that they turnkey their learning to their colleagues. Furthermore, feedback and next steps to teachers are aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, support the school’s instructional focus and are supportive of teachers.

- Observation reports reviewed evidenced feedback to teachers that captured teacher strengths and offered timely and actionable next steps. For example, feedback to a teacher’s ELA lesson commended the teacher for designing a lesson that helped her students understand *Huckleberry Finn*. The school leader also praised the teacher for providing materials and encouraging a dialogue that afforded students an opportunity to connect their understanding of the reading to real life experiences. The school leader offered next steps that included reminding the teacher how “learning tasks must be directly aligned to the instructional objectives,” and how in future lessons it is expected that he allocate more time for the task of the lesson by reducing the time devoted to direct instruction. The school leader reminded the teacher that she will be back in his classroom to monitor the implementation of all recommendations.

- The principal of the school shared how all the school’s administrators are instructional leaders before anything else and that making sure that teachers receive the best possible feedback is a priority. In order to norm the observation process, leaders visit classrooms in pairs and compare feedback. School leaders stress that it is essential that they offer teachers feedback that looks the same regardless of who is doing the observation. In reviewing observation reports, there is clear coherence as it pertains to the construction of the observation reports, as all reports offer a clear picture of the events during the observation, highlight teacher strengths, offer feedback that is actionable, as well as a time frame for implementing recommendations. During the meeting with teachers, they shared how uniform the observation process is, some stating that it doesn’t matter who visits your classroom, “You can expect the feedback to be just as effective.”