Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Queens Transition Center
High school 75Q752
142-10 Linden Boulevard
Queens
NY 11436

Principal: Fritzy Sannon Brown

Dates of Review:
April 25, 2018 - April 26, 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 Transition Center 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>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></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>Well Developed</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 Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>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>Additional Finding</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>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>Area of Focus</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>
Findings
Across all classrooms, teaching practices reflect a coherent set of beliefs on how students learn best, most notably in student-to-student discussions.

Impact
Teaching practices are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching, instructional shifts and discussions at the team and school levels which allows all students to produce work products that reflect high levels of rigor, thinking, participation, and ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- High levels of student work products were seen across all classrooms. In an art class, alternatively assessed students were engaged in creating a painting that illustrated elements of space and perspective. Students were eager to explain what they were working on and many explained specifically how their painting “Looks like it’s far away” and “How drawing a tree up close and the mountains in the back shows perspective.” During a science presentation, students demonstrated ownership as they presented their knowledge of the water cycle through a variety of ways. One student presented a rap song along with a full musical composition that was created by a peer. Students were also able to share rigor in their responses to prompts. One writing example showed how a student identified the chancellor of Germany and when she gained power. Several students created personal haikus, some read, “Steak, burgers and fries, happy, laughter, love and joy, sleepy, mellow chill” while another read, “I am a smart kid, I love to do very well, My grades are decent.”

- Throughout classrooms visited, students had ample opportunities to engage in well-planned and prepared lessons that offered them a magnitude of support. Students also had opportunities to engage in some form of verbal communication in accordance with the student’s ability. During a social studies lesson, students engaged in conversations aided by accountable talk stems, in order to understand the differences between goods and services. Students asked their peer who was presenting, a variety of questions such as, “Are you providing a good or a service?”, and “What is your business?” and then attempted figure what good or service that student represented. During a science class, students engaged in conversations in order to identify the main characteristics of grasses.

- Another belief in how students learn best is by strategic differentiation for all students as evidenced throughout every classroom visited. Scaffolds that helped to engage students in all lessons were seen throughout such as some form of visual support for students including PowerPoint presentations, video clips, graphic organizers, and discussion cues and prompts. During a lesson, the teacher modeled what a happy face looked like by smiling and asking the student to point to a smiling face that she had in front of her. Additionally, modeling was part of every lesson visited, where teachers were observed modeling reading strategies, how to respond to a peer, and how to cite text-based evidence. Teachers also asked students to model for their peers, in which all students were eager to take part.
Findings
The school has a short list of clear, focused school-level goals and action plans apparent in the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) that are tracked for progress. School leaders involve and communicate progress towards all goals to the entire school community through newsletters and a variety of forums.

Impact
Goals are understood by all and tracked and adjusted but are not explicitly linked to accelerated students learning or emotional growth.

Supporting Evidence

- School goals are tracked throughout the year and staff is given regular updates. For example, the school’s goal of decreasing the number of school incidents on the Online Occurrence Reporting System is addressed on a weekly basis. School leaders and staff analyzed data and identified trends, that included time of the day and days of the week and locations where incidents where at their highest. As a result, teachers were exposed to therapeutic crisis intervention services, and professional development (PD) sessions in classroom management. School leaders also added additional teachers in hallways which has decreased hallway incidents. The same process of interim check points was evidenced across all of the school’s goals. However, not clear, was how these and other goals directly leverage changes that are explicitly linked to accelerated student learning and social-emotional growth.

- Communication of goals to the school community happens through a variety of means. Staff is given regular updates through faculty meetings, department meetings, and PD opportunities. Parents are updated on all goals through the School Leadership Team meetings, Parent Teacher Association meetings, and monthly principal’s newsletters. In addition, progress towards goals are shared during the schools Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports team meetings as well as phone calls, emails and through the school’s website.

- The school has an increased parent engagement goal that is tracked and updated throughout the year. This began with surveying parents and asking them how they can be further engaged in being active members of the school community. Through the survey, parents shared the need for more parent meetings and parental activities that take place during times other than during the school day as this made it difficult for parents to attend because of their jobs. As a result, the parent coordinator created additional meeting times and dates in order to cater to parents that needed other times to meet. Furthermore, if parents need it, they can come in and meet one-on-one with the parent coordinator, guidance counselor or other staff member who was responsible for the workshop or training that was offered. As a result, staff has seen an increase in the number of parents attending the workshops provided.
Findings

School staff ensure that all curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigor for all students including English Language Learners and students with disabilities is emphasized and tasks are embedded in a coherent way.

Impact

There is curricular coherence across all grades and subject areas that promotes college and career readiness for all students and assures that all students are engaged in rigorous activities through a variety of modalities that integrate the senses and art forms to demonstrate thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Although this school is divided into four separate locations, curricular coherence was seen throughout all documents in all locations. The principal stated how citing and using textual evidence is something that has been implemented this year and will be seen across all planning documents, regardless of student classification. An English Language Arts (ELA) lesson plan centered on developing habits for success, explained how the teachers would be modeling the read aloud and citing text-based evidence connected to individual and personal space. A music lesson plan included ways that students will be listening to, analyzing and describing music while using evidence from musical pieces, as well as musical vocabulary. An ELA lesson on analyzing poetry, plans for students to be able to write prompts in response to the literature that helps students to interpret a poem based on the author’s choice of setting and characters.

- All academic tasks evidence rigor and higher order thinking skills that require all students to explain their thought process. For example, in an ELA lesson plan, students were asked to cite specific textual evidence to support the analysis of primary and secondary sources. This lesson included speaking and listening components that asked students to initiate and participate effectively in one-on-one and group discussions with diverse partners. Lesson planning for an art lesson included the ways that all students will study the element of space and perspective in art. Students will not only create their own painting but will write a reflection about their art piece and what inspires them about a peer’s art piece. An additional ELA lesson plan engages all students in being able to identify various emotions that people feel by facial expression. Planning requires students to identify names of feelings using vocabulary words and to be able to identify, using thumbs up and thumbs down, what an appropriate behavior or feeling looks like.

- All curricular documents are aligned to the Common Core. An ELA lesson plan on interpersonal skills included planning to have students read text closely in order to understand what the text says and make inferences from the meaning, reflecting the incorporation of an instructional shift. A music lesson plan included planning for students to create, perform and participate in the playing of specific musical instrument as well as skills needed for success in the work place, such as verbal and written communication skills needed for college and career readiness.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**

Throughout all classrooms, teachers use rubrics and assessments that are aligned to the school curriculum and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. Throughout all classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices reflect a varied use of checks for understanding and student self-assessments that includes conferences with students and memorializing student responses using a checklist.

**Impact**

Teachers provide students with actionable and meaningful feedback so that students are aware of their next learning steps. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet all the needs of students’ learning needs.

**Supporting Evidence**

- There was a wide variety of ways that teachers are checking for understanding throughout classrooms visited. Some teachers use exit slips, the traffic light system where green means I understand, yellow means I somewhat understand, and red means I don’t understand, to monitor student understanding of the lessons. It is the principal’s expectation that assessment happens during the beginning, middle, and end of each lesson. If a student does not understand a lesson, the student then works one-to-one with a paraprofessional or the teacher. If the entire class does not understand, then teachers must re-teach a lesson. During a social studies lesson, the teacher conferred with students but had to stop and adjust the lesson as some students were not grasping the material. Additionally, students self-assess by looking at their portfolios and critiquing their own work and the work of their peers. This allows teachers to provide intensive support to foster greater student progress, high expectations and enhanced socialization behaviors.

- Because of the varying degree of skill level throughout classes, teachers offer feedback to students that is skill specific and student friendly. For example, feedback to a student’s creation of their personal haiku, included praising the student for using the correct format to get her ideas across. Next steps included asking the student to use more multi-syllable words in her next assignment. Verbal feedback to another student during a lesson about personal space, included giving the student a high-five and smiling in order to let the student know they answered correctly. Due to a diversity of student skill levels, very often the teacher had to provide feedback in a variety of ways that is meaningful to students in order to communicate with everyone in the class.

- In all of the classrooms visited, teachers checked for understanding by regularly conferring with students and taking notes or using a checklist in order to track student responses. During a social studies lesson, both the teacher and the class paraprofessional used a checklist as they interacted with students. Several times during the lesson, the teacher met briefly with the paraprofessional in order to review the received feedback about specific students and the teacher would then conduct a conference with those students in order to reinforce the material and give additional support. In addition, students very often engaged in self-assessment. During a music class, students played a musical selection on a variety of instruments and then self-assessed their own performance in front of the paraprofessionals and their peers offering a critique of their performance.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating: Well Developed</th>
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations associated with the Danielson Framework for Teaching and effectively partner with all parents’ expectations associated with students’ academic progress.

Impact

There is a culture of mutual accountability between school leaders and teachers for all expectations. Staff support families with respect to student academic progress.

Supporting Evidence

- School staff and parents are partners with respect to their child’s academic progress. School staff communicate with parents through regular Individualized Education Program meetings, daily phone calls, emails, and the constant and effective communication from the school’s parent coordinator. During the meeting with parents, all parents expressed extreme satisfaction with the amount of communication they receive from teachers and school leaders. One parent shared, and all others agreed, “We are treated as if we are part of our child’s educational process, we are welcomed any time to check out our child’s progress.” In addition, the school offers parents a multitude or workshops that allows parents to be active participants in their child’s progress in order to support a path toward college and career readiness. For example, one parent shared how the school did a workshop through the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities and they were able to get the certification necessary to support their child at home.

- The principal clearly and consistently communicates academic and curricular expectations including non-negotiables such as high levels of differentiation to support a diversity of learners connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching component having to do with engaging students in learning. This is communicated through an active instructional walkthrough process. School leaders are consistently visiting classrooms and not only when conducting an observation. Differentiation is something that was highlighted and noted across many of the classroom observations reports and it is clear that it is a focus schoolwide. Additionally, teachers and school leaders review and comment on all teacher team agendas holding all mutually accountable for expectations. For example, principal feedback on a team’s agenda informed the group that the agenda was “too vague” and needed more detail about specific topics discussed. It also reminded the teachers that there needed to be equality in teacher voice among all participants. The principal also asked that the team be prepared to discuss all of the recommendations made by “Monday of next week.”

- The school hosts workshops at multiple sites and repeats the offerings to accommodate parents unable to travel, giving them options of other dates they can attend. The increased number of workshops is in response to feedback from parents who could not attend workshops during the school day. Parents are offered workshops that include the college application process, financial aid application process and career development information for those students who will not be attending college. The parent coordinator also arranges for these workshops to be given at different times of the day in order to address parental concern. All parents shared how if they happen to miss a workshop, the school will do everything possible to provide the materials that were handed out, or schedule a one-on-one conference.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

Findings

All teachers are engaged in professional inquiry-based collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are embedded throughout the school through opportunities for teachers to assume operational roles and support colleagues at the various school sites.

Impact

Teacher instructional capacity is strengthened resulting in schoolwide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all students. Teacher voice plays an integral role in decision making throughout the school.

Supporting Evidence

- A collaborative environment is a direct result of school wide inquiry work where teachers are empowered to make decisions aimed at addressing students’ needs. At one observed interdepartmental teacher team meeting, an English teacher shared a student’s persuasive writing example along with the rubric used in the lesson. Teachers used the Tuning Protocol in order to allow teachers to share noticings, as well as warm and cool feedback. Afterwards, teachers shared their thoughts and gave suggestions on how to help the teacher and student improve. This shared leadership has led the staff to establish a school wide structure used consistently throughout the school to identify, target and assess students to increase learning outcomes. This work has led to increased student achievement most notably in students being able to explain their particular subject matter and why they are learning it. For example, during a classroom visit, a student was able to explain what a polynomial is and what connection it has to real world applications.

- Leadership opportunities for teachers are found everywhere. Because this school is located in four different sites teacher leadership positions are integral and essential. Teacher leaders at each site help to run each building and support colleagues on a daily basis. Additionally, the instructional cabinet is the main data team of the school, comprised of the teachers from the various sites. Administration coaches the team leaders to interpret data, to make inferences and then turnkey this information to their teams. Teachers and team leaders are provided with data analysis on scholarship reports, credit accumulation data, attendance data, Regents line item results, formative assessments, progress towards graduation and the correlation among several of those data points. This process builds distributive leadership among teachers and creates optimal opportunities conducive to both teacher and student success.

- Teachers instructional capacity has been strengthened as a result of the teacher team work. School leaders report seeing more cohesiveness and collaboration among all school sites. Teachers at all sites visited, report feeling a much “larger sense of teamwork.” Teachers are sharing their classrooms more and opening them up for intervisitations and feedback from their peers and school leaders. Teachers between all sites report a “Friendly competition and a strong desire to learn amongst colleagues.” An example of that cohesiveness is how five teachers worked collaboratively to support and help students put together presentations on the water cycle. The event was extremely successful, noting that even students who in the past were non-verbal, took part in the presentation even performing a rap song.