Quality Review Report
2018-2019

Queens School of Inquiry,
The Secondary School
25Q252
158-40 76 Road
Queens
NY 11366

Principal: Meredith Inbal

Dates of Review:
May 21, 2019 - May 22, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Carlos Perez
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 School of Inquiry, The serves students in grade 6 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>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>Additional Finding</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>
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</table>
## School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</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>Area of Celebration</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>
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</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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 Focus</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>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>Well Developed</td>
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Area of Celebration

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

The school’s approach to culture building is supported by a theory of action based on a student’s social emotional support being front and center.

Impact

Student voice is meaningfully involved in the decision making process that contributes to school improvement efforts and has resulted in the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- The school employs the Renzulli enrichment model whose foundation rests on student voice and student choice. Teachers use data gathered from the school's enrichment model in order to design and implement clubs and after school activities. For example, students wanted a running club and petitioned the idea to administration along with soliciting a teacher who runs marathons to be the club advisor. High school students spoke with school leaders and asked if they could help with middle school discipline issues by speaking to the students that are misbehaving in an effort to help them learn from their experience as middle school students. During the meeting with students many students shared that their voice is “always heard” and valued in their school. Students believe that whenever they need something or want a new program in their school, they know they can go to any teacher or administrator and they will listen to their requests.

- School leaders made a conscious effort to ensure that the need for a dean of discipline would not be necessary. Rather, they believed in using resources to support students in other ways such as three fulltime guidance counselors, one fulltime social worker, and two fulltime speech teachers. These staff members are part of the team that provides support to student’s social and emotional needs. In addition, sixth and seven-grade health classes have wellness lessons as part of their advisory period each day. The schools’ freshman seminar course uses the Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teams as its anchor text. Students shared they believe that there is always at least one adult they can speak to or go to when they have an issue or problem. One student stated, “You never feel alone here, it’s like a family, everyone supports each other”.

- Staff has created an effective, safe, and inclusive school culture. The school has implemented a co-teaching model across all grades and classes. Teachers believe that by having two and sometimes three teachers in every class, it allows for specific differentiation for every student. The school has established a Gender and Sexuality Alliance to help ensure equity for all. The middle school counselors have implemented restorative circles as a means to assist students with conflict resolution. Students as well as staff members are trained in restorative practices allowing students to take ownership of their behaviors. Students seek out a restorative circle on their own when a conflict arises.
Area of Focus

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

Findings

School leaders and teacher peers support the development of teachers through feedback from an effective cycle of classroom observations. Most, but not as yet, the vast majority of feedback provided teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges and next steps.

Impact

Schoolwide instructional practices are elevated and promote professional growth. Feedback to teachers articulates expectations but does not always align with professional goals for teachers.

Supporting Evidence

- Feedback to teachers accurately captures all stages of the lesson, as well as highlighting teacher strengths and offering clear actionable next steps. Following the observation of a middle school computer science lesson the written feedback provided commended the teacher’s clear evidence that allowed students to work toward mastery and her use of high school students as the experts in the field who conferred with middle school students on their projects troubleshooting as needed. Next steps recommended the use of the language of the rubric when giving feedback to students in order for them to make that connection. Feedback to a teacher following an Integrated Co-teaching (ICT) Humanities class praised the teacher for the abundant differentiation and open discussion that occurred throughout the lesson. While improvement in ongoing assessment was part of the next steps suggested to a history teacher it was also recommended he conference with students while others worked independently. However, not all reports contained such specific and actionable feedback limiting teachers’ understanding of how to strategically improve their teaching practice.

- Support for teacher practice begins with the school’s strategic use of frequent classroom observations. At the start of the school year school leaders visit classrooms together to norm their practice and decide which teachers will require additional support in specific areas. Using data from their observations, school leaders set up the observation schedule by semester and regularly discuss trends and patterns during cabinet meetings. For example, school leaders explained how one teacher was struggling with unit plans and essential questions. As a result, a substitute teacher was assigned to cover that teacher’s class to provide one-on-one professional support focusing on implementing key essential questions to ensure improved student understanding. Additionally, during pre and post observation conferences the teacher and the administrator review student work products to measure the impact of the lesson.

- Teacher goals are created in conjunction with school leaders at the start of the year during the Initial Planning Conferences (IPCs). Very often, teacher goals are aligned to the schoolwide goals. This year the goal centers on inquiry and its impact on teaching practices. Three official meetings connected to teacher’s goals take place. The IPC at the start of the year, a mid-year and a culminating meeting at the end-of the year. However, conversations addressing goals are happening weekly whenever teachers meet with peers or with school leaders. Teachers attribute these conversations to the open door policy that exists in the school. However, there is not a clear system connecting teacher feedback and its alignment to their goals.
## Additional Finding

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

All staff ensures that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (Common Core) strategically integrating instructional shifts with a focus on literacy across all subjects. Academic tasks evidence rigor, high-order skills and are embedded coherently throughout all grades and subjects.

### Impact

There is curricular coherence across all grades and subjects that promote college and career readiness resulting in all learners demonstrating their thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- College and career readiness is a focus across the school and is evidenced in planning documents. All unit and lesson plans ensure that students will have access to skills that will prepare them for the college experience. This includes plans that provide students with opportunities to engage in, Socratic Seminars, research, technology learning and math support courses. There are Pathways-aligned courses that fulfill the requirements for college undergraduates in English Language Arts (ELA), history, and math that offer students college credit and experience. The school is working toward having all students participate in college work while at the school. For example, partnering with CUNY Queens College, content department teams developed vertically aligned curricula that prepare students for the rigorous course work they will receive upon graduation. Middle school history and ELA curricula incorporate lessons on budgeting, paying tuition and selecting the appropriate college.

- All planning documents contained rigorous tasks for all students. Common Core Learning Standards included integrating multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats. The math and science departments work to translate quantitative information into visuals or words. For example, unit and lesson plans for an AP Biology class that has both general education students and students with disabilities, indicate that students work in mixed leveled pairs in order to diagram the structure of DNA and discuss genetic variations. ELA unit maps include higher order Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions to be used with each lesson plan, as well as scaffolds such as; sentence starters, vocabulary lists, and exemplars allowing for multiple entry points as needed. A tenth-grade humanities plan asked students to craft universal questions as a means of analyzing human rights and the way they impact people. Scaffolds for English Language Learners (ELLs) included translated documents, translated vocabulary words, and bilingual dictionaries.

- There are a variety of ways that curricular coherence is evidenced in all planning documents. For example, all planning documents across grades and subjects clearly outline the Common Core standards addressed throughout the lesson. Lesson plans outline the connections to prior learning, outline key essential questions, and list scaffolds and accommodations needed for specific students. As literacy across the curricula is a strategic instructional shift, aspects of literacy are embedded throughout all planning documents. For example, math lesson plans ensure that students are explaining their processes in answering math questions. Social studies lesson plans require students to regularly cite text-based evidence when responding to questions, and science plans require students to fully explain the process by which they reach conclusions when engaging in scientific inquiry.
Additional Finding

### Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy

**Rating:** Well Developed

#### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms teaching practices are aligned to the school’s belief that students learn best when they engage in student-to-student discourse.

#### Impact

Students are producing meaningful work products that reflect high levels of thinking, participation and ownership.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms all students engage in challenging tasks that demonstrate higher-order thinking skills. Fluency in math and the use of text-based answers and academic vocabulary in ELA are part of the school’s daily instructional focus. For example, during a seventh-grade math lesson students used academic vocabulary in order to solve multistep ratio and percent problems to budget the student’s dream life. Students researched careers and discussed their findings within their groups. During a tenth-grade humanities lesson students discussed one condition necessary to fulfill themselves as human beings. Active discourse, use of academic vocabulary and text-based evidence was observed across classes. Students were overheard stating, “I believe one condition is empathy, you have to be empathetic to be a good human being” while a second group could be overheard making statements such as “I think you also have to have the will to be the best and strive for greatness.”

- Student work products such as writing pieces evidenced high levels of student research and rigor. One student response to the question “Did the government effectively regulate big business during the Progressive era?” provided strong background information, which set the foundation for several claims and included the use of high levels of academic vocabulary. Student work products in Spanish evidenced how students use the target language appropriately to generate responses and pose questions as part of multistep exercises. Students keep journals where they respond to written prompts and use those responses to generate classroom discussions.

- Students participate in class discussions by responding to both teacher and student-generated questions. Students not only answered questions, but also asked questions and extended their own thinking by providing examples from the text or their discussions to support their contributions. During a seventh-grade science class, students worked in pairs using laptop computers and engaged in discussions to develop an argument along with text-based evidence addressing how the laws of physics affect their everyday lives. During an eighth-grade humanities class, students worked in groups and engaged in discussions as they analyzed the lyrics to the song “Glory” to reveal the message of the song. Rich and rigorous discourse such as this was consistently observed from class to class.
Findings
Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned to the school’s curricula and offer students a clear portrait of student mastery. Across all classrooms teachers employ varied methods to check for understanding such as conferencing and gallery walks.

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

Supporting Evidence

- Students shared that feedback provided by their teachers is extremely helpful. One student explained that all of his teachers are always telling him what he needs to do to improve. A second student shared how she always gets a glow for something she did well and a grow for something that needs improvement. Another student said that one of the first things he does when he gets back an assignment is review what the teacher wrote because it “means a lot” to him. In addition, rubrics are attached to student work products and teachers identify not only where the student scored on the rubric, but also what specifically was missing to bring the student to the next higher rating level. Another student explained that in Spanish every time she gets her portfolio back following every assessment, she reviews the feedback that her teacher offers because it is “very important” to her as it allows her to make any adjustment necessary and tells her what she needs to do to improve.

- In all the classes visited teachers regularly conferenced with students and memorialized the conferences using a checklist or some form of a note taker. In addition, the vast majority of classrooms are co-taught which allows for multiple teachers to engage in checks for understanding. During a tenth-grade humanities class, teachers created groups of students based on responses and data collected during student conferences. During a tenth-grade math lesson, not only did the teacher conference with students, but also had students participate in a gallery walk, which allowed students to leave feedback for their peers on post-it notes. Teachers’ lesson plans also evidenced that teachers use online assessment programs in order to evaluate student learning and created groups based on student responses.

- Teacher feedback consistently captures students’ strengths and always provides actionable next steps for students leading to their improving their work. For example, feedback on a student’s science poster praised the student for the use of visuals and offered next steps that asked the student to better explain the difference between velocity and acceleration. Feedback on a student’s social studies writing assignment included a glow that read, “This is your best intro paragraph in your middle school career. You provide background information essential to understanding your argument and created a clear claim.” In social studies, a student was provided glows that commended the proper claim he developed regarding how Rome gained power during the Punic Wars and a grow that directed the student to conduct further research to help support additional claims and counterclaims.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams &amp; Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings

Teachers engage in inquiry-based professional collaborations and take part in the distributed leadership structures, specifically as heads of departments, which exist across the school.

Impact

Teachers have strengthened their instructional capacity, which has resulted in schoolwide instructional coherence and increased student achievement. Across the school teacher voice plays an integral part in key decisions that positively affect students’ learning.

Supporting Evidence

- During structured inquiry, grade teams look at student work to determine if and how students are learning and what they need to improve. Teachers stated they are focused on curricular alignment, student work and their own practices. They use the Learning from Student Work Protocol when engaging in inquiry. During the team meeting, teachers used this protocol to “Analyze students’ progress towards established goals and reflect upon instruction in order to make adjustments in their teaching practice to better support student’s needs.” The meeting was structured in a way that offered all teachers’ opportunities to describe and interpret student work and identify the implications for classroom practice. Teachers agree that the collective efforts of teams have a direct impact on their approaches to instruction, teacher leadership and student collaborations. Teachers use professional development and planning time to create performance tasks to promote mastery learning. Work such as this has contributed towards their students achieving 60 percent proficiency on the 2018 ELA state exam, a 19 percent increase from the year before.

- There are teachers that act as department heads for every department in the school and facilitate department meetings. Department heads work closely with school leaders and support teachers instructionally. Teachers are constantly receiving training in areas they request and there is always an expectation that the information is shared with colleagues. School leaders and teachers both shared how “This school is owned by the staff and students.” Teachers believe that their voice is not only heard, but their voice is expected as a part of the growth process of the school. There are currently seven teachers who have gone through the administrative program and completed their administrative internship in the school. Additionally, the school has leaders for their school’s social emotional learning program, which assists teachers in supporting the social emotional wellbeing of all students.

- All teachers expressed how they personally feel they are “Better teachers” as a result of working in teams. School leaders and teachers feel as if more coherence results as well. Mastery-Based Learning and standards-based assessments are a direct result of teacher teams, and is employed across all classrooms. Teachers developed the idea of using student conferencing as one of their primary tools of checking for student understanding, which is utilized throughout all classrooms visited.