



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Queens Academy High School

High School 540

138 -11 35th Avenue

Queens

NY 11354

Principal: Beverly Short

Dates of review: April 9 - 10, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Bonnie Laboy

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Queens Academy is a high school with 466 students from grades 10 through 12. The school population comprises 45% Black, 37% Hispanic, 11% Asian, 7% White. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 71.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 56% eligibility.

The school is situated on two sites within Queens, at Flushing and Jamaica. The students have moved here, into alternative education, for a second opportunity to gain a high school diploma.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal leads in a respectful and collaborative manner and shares a clear vision with the whole school community.
- The principal, instructional cabinet and teachers work collaboratively to promote high expectations for student outcomes and personal growth.
- Students are treated with full respect and are consistently encouraged to succeed by a professional and committed teaching staff and administration.
- The school places a high priority on the social and personal development of all its students.
- Parents value the communication, partnership and open door policy that the school promotes.
- The school effectively aligns guidance services to support student needs.
- The school supports new teachers effectively.
- The administrators and teachers use a variety of data to identify strengths and weaknesses in student achievement.
- The school monitors well student attendance and has timely follow-up procedures in place for student absences.

What the school needs to improve

- Disaggregate data to assess the progress of specific sub-groups that are representative of the student body.
- Evaluate more closely comparative data among classes and subject areas and with similar schools.
- Establish an annual professional development plan, with measurable goals, and foster collaboration between departments and campuses further.
- Develop teachers' skills in the use of assessment data to plan differentiated learning and support for students.
- Create objectively measurable short-term and interim goals to address whole school and student priorities within precise timeframes for monitoring.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The school caters for students who have not graduated at other high schools. The students arrive at the school with varying needs and the school is successful in re-engaging them in the education process and supporting them in reaching their academic goals. Staff and students have a singular focus on helping students reach graduation. The school has a strong commitment to enabling students to achieve both academically and in terms of personal development and has effective support services to achieve this. The administration and teaching staff set high expectations for the students in a personalized school setting. However, leaders have not yet agreed clear goals to achieve these expectations. Neither have they created action plans to guide the school's work with clear success criteria to measure within agreed timeframes. This does not assist teachers to set student improvement goals that will influence whole school performance. Parents value the school's open door policy that enables good communication. Parents, students and staff take pride in students' achievements. The school staff know their students well. The strong sense of mutual trust, respect and appreciation underpin the school culture. As one student stated, "Our teachers are our friends and treat us like adults." The school is working towards transitioning to a full Regents-based curriculum. Under the principal's leadership, members of faculty are developing pacing calendars and subject curriculum maps, aligned to New York State standards. The school effectively supports new teachers. The school provides training during the summer before the school year begins and throughout the school year. The school uses a variety of data to understand student progress. However, as yet, leaders do not disaggregate data sufficiently to assess the relative performance of some student groups, or to compare the school's performance among classes and subject areas. While a growing number of teachers use data to differentiate some instruction, this is not consistent practice across the school, resulting in slower progress for some students.

After an analysis of the school's progress report and the school report cards, the school's inquiry team identified and targeted students with the greatest need in math. The school created two math classes to serve students in small class settings and used pre-assessments to target instructional support. Further work is necessary to develop additional support strategies for students in the Inquiry study who have not made gains in math. The school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report. The principal has established consistent and regular communication between sites and has worked towards improving the physical fitness program at the Flushing site. Plans to improve the physical education program at the Flushing site are underway including the expansion of extracurricular activities that involve physical activity.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the student’s progress over time.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school gathers a wide range of school-generated and State data. This includes student progress reports, scholarship reports, report cards, and mock Regents exams. The school uses this data to gain a sound understanding of the progress of individual students. Guidance counselors use intake interviews, transcript analysis and base line assessments to gain an understanding of incoming students’ performance levels. They effectively use this data to create student programs, assign intervention services and plan for individual needs. Teachers are using data gathering and tracking systems such as Teacher-Ease and Class-Master. They are becoming more confident in the collection of data, but they do not yet use this data fully to plan for student specific, differentiated needs.

Although the school tracks progress for special education and English language learners, data linked to other sub-groups representative of the student body is not systematically gathered or disaggregated. Therefore, leaders cannot look closely at performance data pertaining to specific sub-groups to the school, develop goals for them and monitor their performance. Special attention has been given to the programming of English language learners and new instructional strategies have been introduced. However, it is too soon to measure their impact on expected student outcomes. The school monitors performance based on past performance data, but does not yet fully measure progress between classes, grades and subject areas in a systematic fashion. The school has begun to make a limited comparison with similar schools, but a thorough comparison has not been completed. As a result, comparison data is not widely used to identify patterns in student performance outcomes.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school has implemented department planning committees to establish effective end of year department goals and objectives. However the school does not collate this data into measures of class, grade and subject interim and long-term achievement, so it is not able to measure objectively if it is on track to meets its overall school goals. Interim goals to facilitate their achievement are not yet integral to their planning, making it more difficult for the school to monitor its progress. The planning committees point the way forward for future collaborative planning and goal setting.

The school pays particular attention to improving the performance of students in the greatest of need. Leaders and faculty analyze data from student progress reports and report cards periodically throughout the year. Consequently, they quickly identify and address concerns. Guidance counselors spearhead case conferencing sessions to discuss struggling student’s performance and to establish timely interventions such as tutoring, and one-on-one support.

The school conveys high expectations to students, parents, and caregivers. This begins during the orientation period when students enter the school. Expectations are strongly reinforced throughout the year. A rigorous system of progress reports, report cards and case conferencing ensures that students and their parents are well informed of progress

and available support. As a result, students are well aware of their academic standing and their plan for improvement. The overarching goal, which drives all members of the school, is to ensure that students graduate from high school with a meaningful post secondary school plan.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

Departments have begun to develop curriculum maps aligned to the State standards and the skills and concepts needed for students to gain mastery. Student work portfolios have been instituted school wide. Some teachers use these to provide academic support. However, teachers do not yet make systematic analysis of student portfolios. This means that there is inconsistent use of the information teachers gain from portfolio monitoring to make next steps in learning transparent or to differentiate future instruction.

Staff know their students well, and there is a high level of mutual respect between teachers and students. The teachers recognize their responsibility for the progress of the students in their care. Dedicated, committed members of staff encourage students to take academic risks, supporting them all the while. Students voiced their recognition that the connection between high expectations, being treated as adults, and timely supports were motivating factors in their learning.

The school pays high regard to student needs when making scheduling, staff assignments, and program changes. For example, a need to support struggling math students led to the hiring of Kaplan Educational Services to improve student outcomes on the Regents exam and to develop teacher expertise further. An analysis of student transcripts, end of term results and Regents results are all used to determine students’ programming needs. Evidence of this is the creation of two new Math A courses where small class sizes are an aid to learning for struggling students. Many students come to the school with low attendance issues and academic challenges. The school has made attendance a key issue and has developed very effective procedures to address this issue. Both students and parents confirm that attendance is followed up daily and phone calls are made home on the day of a student’s absence.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The principal is respected in this well-organized school. She has taken a proactive approach in building a sense of collaboration. Based on a variety of teacher interests and student needs, the school offers a vast selection of professional development opportunities both inside and outside of school. For example, the English as a second language teacher attended a weeklong conference to learn new strategies to support beginner English language learners. The teachers are effective in turn keying information gathered at outside training at department meetings and via the principal’s bi-monthly newsletter. Mentors provide useful support to teachers new to the school and receive good guidance on transitioning to the school’s personalized approach to students’ learning.

Currently there is no long-term professional development plan that connects one professional development opportunity to another. Therefore, there is an expressed need

for a yearlong plan to provide continuity and consistency to supporting school-wide goals. Although teachers share information, they do not formally observe one another's classes to support instruction to improve student outcomes. The principal conducts formal and information observations. However, observations do not always focus sharply enough on the use of assessment data to drive differentiation of instruction. The principal has taken steps to implement consistent communication between both campuses as evidenced by disseminating the same calendars, memos and procedural information to both sites. Currently structures are not well enough embedded to ensure sharing of best practice and merging of good ideas. Links with local community based organizations have provided effective programs for developing students' personal, social and community skills involving such opportunities as career exploration and work internships.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is underdeveloped with proficient features.

Under the principal's leadership, the school has established collaborative long-term goal setting procedures. Additionally, the school has developed goals for this term. They do not include, however, objectively measurable success criteria to evaluate growth at interim review periods. As a result, the school does not monitor and revise these goals systematically. An analysis of student progress reports, report cards and exam results is used to modify programs and assign interventions. A thorough analysis of the impact of each intervention is not yet a standard practice at the school.

The school does not yet have systems in place to compare, monitor and adapt plans for the performance of specific student groups. Therefore, they do not make full use of student data and this hampers their ability to identify trends, revise their practices and to develop strategic plans of support for particular subgroups.

The principal has developed collaborative goals with outcomes defined. It is too early to determine their impact on driving the next stage of improvement. Useful work this year has laid the foundation for further development. The principal has a clear vision for the future of the school and communicates this very clearly. All members of the school community understand this vision and support her goal of building a truly collaborative community.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Queens Academy High School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score			X		

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?			X		
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?			X		
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?			X		
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?		X			
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?		X			
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X		

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?		X			
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?			X		
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?			X		
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X		

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?			X		
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?			X		
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?			X		
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?		X			
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?			X		
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X		

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?			X		
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?			X		
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?		X			
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?			X		
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X		

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?		X			
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?		X			
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?		X			
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?		X			
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X			

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped