



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Queens Valley School

Public School 164

**138- 01 77th Avenue
Queens
NY 11367**

Principal: Anne Alfonso

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Reviewer: Jan Lomas

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 164, Queens Valley School for the Arts, serves 651 students in grades pre – kindergarten through grade 8. The school expanded last year to encompass a grade 7 cohort and in this school year has, for the first time, a grade 8 group of students. It is a Title I school.

The new principal joined the school in October 2006.

The school serves a multicultural school community. The predominant ethnic groups are those from White backgrounds (33.75%) and from Hispanic families (30.1%). In addition, 23.8% of students are from Asian families while the remainder, 12.28%, are Black. The proportion of students who have recently arrived in the country has fallen in recent years and is much the same as that for similar and other City schools.

Ninety eight students have special education needs and the school serves an almost equivalent number of students, 97, who are English language learners.

Attendance, at around 93%, has been maintained at slightly above the figure for similar and City schools in recent years.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- In a short time, the new principal has gained a clear view of the school, its achievements and the areas for development.
- She is ably assisted by the instructional team who share collaboratively in key areas of leadership.
- Coaches use their knowledge of team colleagues to focus on individual, grade and whole school professional development.
- Students speak confidently and articulately about what they are learning and what they need to do next to improve.
- The principal has a clear, strategic view of the use of the use of data to underpin continuous school development and is now leading others in these skills.
- The school is working hard to address all aspects of the growth of the school as it expands to encompass grades 7 and 8.
- Students are enthusiastic about the opportunities they have to develop their talents through art, music, dance and video technology.
- Parents are supportive of the school and recognize teachers' hard work in seeking to meet the needs of each student.
- Strategies to further involve parents in the work of the school are already proving effective.
- The school is organized to run smoothly on a day to day basis.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop how the school uses and analyzes data about all sub-groups and 'categories of interest' to the school.
- Build onto professional development planning to ensure that all teachers are able to translate the use of data into effective, agile differentiation to meet all needs.
- Strengthen strategic planning to ensure that systems and structures effectively support focused monitoring, evaluation and revision of school goals.
- Continue the development of the curriculum and the clear links to standards in all grade so that meaningful and precise data about student progress is generated.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The new principal has begun her leadership by ensuring that she has a good overview of all elements of the school's work and its place within the community. She is developing a collaborative approach to school development to engage all in continuous improvement and is being ably assisted by an instructional team who share in the leadership of the school. Although the overall evaluation for the school is proficient at this stage in its development, there are a number of well developed features.

Public School 164, The Queen's Valley School, provides opportunities for students to experience a broad and varied specialist arts curriculum alongside the rigor of the academic program.

As a magnet school for the arts, the school is equipped with studios for dance, video production and the visual arts. Instruction is provided throughout all grades in dance, vocal training, band, video production and visual arts and the older students undertake a two year concentrated talent program.

The school is developing the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of students in all grades including the newer grades 7 and 8.

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 student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The new principal has a clear view of how data is currently being used in the school to provide a focus for planning, goal setting and appropriate differentiation of instruction. She is ensuring that systems and structures are in place, underpinned by clear expectations, to support consistent and ongoing assessment and analysis of student progress and performance. The principal has formed an instructional team that engages in ongoing data analysis which is disseminated to and discussed with staff colleagues.

The school uses a range of data such as that generated by E-CLAS, Princeton Review NYSESLAT and Rigby Benchmark assessments to ensure a clear picture of the performance of students. All teachers have access to this data and are beginning to supplement the information with their own assessments and record keeping, unit assessments and tests from curriculum programs in order to maintain a constantly updated view of individual progress. The principal is aware that, at this stage, some teachers are more comfortable with assessment and record keeping than others.

There is a developing focus on analyzing data, including that for the gains and grow reports, to identify students whose progress could be further enhanced and accelerated and on ensuring that instruction is carefully matched to the next steps for groups and

individuals. Literacy and mathematics coaches provide guidance and support in the classroom and through professional development opportunities, in response to issues which arise from their monitoring process. In addition, collaborative meetings provide opportunities for professional discussion.

The use of data also allows the principal and her senior colleagues to carry out monitoring and comparison of achievement, progress, trends and patterns class by class and grade by grade, across content areas and in relation to similar schools.

The school's monitoring of the progress and performance of subgroups such as English language learners and special needs students and the overall trends in achievement for differing ethnic groups is proficient overall. However, the school does not as yet routinely analyze the comparative performance of groups such as those defined by ethnicity or gender to ensure that teaching is equally effective for all.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The current Comprehensive Educational Plan was constructed before the new principal was appointed. However, she has already established a clear understanding of the needs and achievements of the school at this stage of its development. She is taking the school forward, keeping the focus for all clearly upon the key priorities from the plan and responding to emerging issues drawn from analysis, observation and discussion.

Formative and summative assessment is being used to enable teachers to plan for instruction and the next steps for learning for each student. The instructional team support teachers with the analysis and use of data. Coaches provide appropriate guidance to teachers in ensuring that the outcomes of assessment are being used effectively to group students and to differentiate their instruction. The academic support team keeps all students who are identified for additional interventions under careful review and the school has recently looked again at how extended school opportunities can be best used to serve current needs. In the classroom, for example, support teachers for English language learners work closely with class teachers to plan and provide for additional support for students in the content areas, including those who have recently achieved proficiency.

The structure of grade level and departmental meetings means that teachers are enabled to reflect upon the structures and strategies outlined above and to work closely together to plan, discuss, practice and utilize support from coaches.

Students are learning how to self assess and evaluate their own work through goal setting with their teachers in key content areas, and through the school's developing use of rubrics to focus upon the outcomes of their learning. Students speak confidently about what they are learning and about their strengths and areas for further improvement.

Parents express their support for the school. They are confident that the school provides learning opportunities and strategies which motivate students and that the staff enable progress through focused teaching and support according to need. Students recognize the value of the instructional approaches, such as conferencing, that teachers use in order

to give feedback to them about their work and to help them to focus on what they need to do to improve further.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The curriculum committee has ensured that the curriculum has been mapped in the core areas. However, work is currently ongoing to fully develop the program of studies for the new grades 7 and 8. The coaches and staff are also working to match the curriculum to the standards and to devise rubrics which generate precise data, shared with students, about what they know, understand and can do and what they need to do next to improve.

The introduction of grades 7 and 8 has been appropriately supported by budgeting to enable the expansion of suitable resources and materials. The principal has looked carefully at scheduling to ensure that circulation around the upper grade classrooms is minimized so as to avoid undue disruption. Additionally, in the upper grades, class teachers have been scheduled to work with science and social studies specialists to ensure support and continuity during teaching sessions for special education students.

The curriculum is enriched by opportunities to study the arts in areas including dance, vocal and instrumental music, video and visual arts and to experience specialist teaching within appropriately equipped studios and music rooms. Students speak of their excitement and enjoyment of these experiences. This engagement in learning is demonstrated in the dance studio where children respond fully to the high expectations of their teachers and give their total concentration to the exercises practised. In the art studio, special needs students rise to the challenge of considering the art and design work being discussed and answer questions with reflective care.

Teachers work collaboratively in teams to discuss the delivery of the curriculum and plan for instruction to ensure that the needs of individuals and groups are met. The four literacy and numeracy coaches work with different grade teams. They know their colleagues well and provide carefully tailored support and guidance. However, the ability of all teachers to translate data into appropriately differentiated learning opportunities varies across the grades. For example, when students' instruction is challenging with high expectations and opportunities to reflect about their learning and ideas, individually or in groups, they are extremely well engaged by their learning. In some lessons teachers are not as confident about using their subject knowledge and combining this with approaches that fully motivate and engage students.

Students appreciate that their teachers strive to meet their needs whether personal or academic. One commented that 'teachers allow us to have a voice.' This care for students extends to an appropriate range of strategies for ensuring that attendance is monitored. These include telephone calls and letters home.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around 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 new to the school and the appointments she has already made were undertaken during vacation time when it was not possible to draw fully on the support of other colleagues. However, she is clear that a collegiate approach would be her preferred model in the future. Appointments were made with a clear focus upon knowledge and understanding about teaching approaches which match with the school's priorities, a commitment to collaboration and confidence with the use of data to underpin planning.

The principal, literacy and numeracy coaches have agreed the current focus for professional development which has been drawn from the Comprehensive Education Plan. The instructional team meets weekly to discuss how professional development and support for all staff is progressing in line with individual and team needs. Coaches have very good knowledge of staff needs and use this to build appropriate support and development strategies around school priorities. School wide opportunities for professional development are provided by the coaches and through external agencies and the ongoing partnership with the America's Choice program. In addition, staff members undertake visits to each other's classrooms to observe practice and are able to experience model lessons presented by the coaches. Appropriate support is provided for new teachers within the school. Teachers feel that there are good opportunities to discuss in teams, departments and across grades and this means that a collaborative, mutually supportive approach is enabled.

In the short time that she has been at the school, the principal and newly formed instructional team have undertaken 'walk-through' sessions with all classes and these have enabled the reinforcement of generic good practice. Formal, mandated observations of teaching colleagues will shortly begin. 'Walk-throughs' linked clearly with specific current school priorities are also planned.

Although it is early days, the new principal has gained a clear and comprehensive view of the school and the priorities that now need to be taken forward. Parents express that the transition to the new leadership has been effected smoothly.

Partnerships with a number of community based organizations and external agencies are used to enrich the curriculum and provide additional services to students. The school is currently working constructively to strengthen its partnership with parents and there has been a recent good turn out for the 'Meet the Teacher' night.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The current Comprehensive Education Plan is a detailed document which was prepared prior to the appointment of the current principal. Goals are largely measurable; however the present administration is aware that the way percentage increases are calculated

needs to be rooted in a clear analysis of data. This is in order to ensure that improvements are both appropriately challenging and realistic. The use of strategic planning to guide the work of the school is proficient overall; however, the detail of action planning does not always identify who will be specifically accountable for overseeing each goal to more easily check that all is on track towards achievement. Specific intervals of periodic review are not consistently given and links with other systems and structures, such as focused classroom observation, are not always explicitly referenced to enable all evidence towards success to be brought together and evaluated at appropriate points in the school year.

The principal has a good understanding of the use of data to underpin school development and is leading all staff to enhance and use these skills. School priorities are reviewed on an ongoing basis and the infrastructure of meetings allows for any changes and amendments to plans and goals to be made as appropriate. The school is now poised to make good use of strategic planning to ensure that it is a meaningful and accessible tool to drive further improvement.

The principal, assistant principal and coaches maintain an overview of priorities for the development of instruction through their work in the classrooms, through attendance at team meetings, by providing professional development and by 'walk-throughs'. Carefully tailored guidance and input from coaches is then provided on an ongoing basis to support teachers when using analysis of data and assessments to review planning and strategies for instruction. The system of collaborative team meetings enables teachers and support staff to discuss and review plans and goals for students on an ongoing basis. Teachers are valuing these opportunities to further hone and develop their practice in this way under the guidance of the new leadership.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Queens Valley School (PS 164)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

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 student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 	X		
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and 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 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X	
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.		X	
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X	
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	