



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Queens Gateway to Health Sciences Secondary
School**

Intermediate and High School 680

**150-91 87 Road
Queens
NY 11432**

Principal: Cynthia Edwards

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Reviewer: Cheryl Baker

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Queens Gateway to Health Sciences Secondary School is a six year academic and health career school for students in grades seven through twelve. Students enter the school via a screened application process at grades seven and nine. Enrollment for 2006-2007 is 621, an increase of fifty-four students from the 2005-2006 school year. Black students are 41.3% of the student body; Hispanics, 15%; Asian, 32%; White, 2.5%; other, 2.3%. There are no special education or English language learner students. Female students represent 63.7% of the population while males are 36.3%. The school does not receive Title I funding. Attendance over the period from 2003-2005 was over 94%, which was above that in similar schools and well above that in schools across the City. The school has a selective entrance application process which emphasizes prior academic performance.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Informed, focused leadership is provided for using data to improve instruction.
- High expectations for academic achievement are set and supported.
- Clear expectations are set for teachers in the delivery of instruction and their responsibility to participate in the life of the school.
- Instruction is monitored with regularity.
- Rigorous hiring practices ensure that all staff are highly skilled and are committed to the mission of the school.
- The school honors its unique commitment to provide students with challenging academic instruction and real-life experiences in health careers.
- A safe, supportive school culture ensures that students across the grade seven through twelve spectrum feel respected and nurtured.
- Clear procedures are set to ensure that the school runs smoothly.
- The governance of the school is structured to support shared decision-making among administration and staff.
- The school works collaboratively with an active parent organization.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to provide professional development in the analysis of assessment and other pertinent data in order to help teachers gain deeper knowledge of what each student knows and is able to do, and where they need additional targeted support.
- Continue to provide teachers with professional development in techniques that will help them to successfully differentiate instruction to improve the achievement of each student.
- Continue to support standards-based instruction through the development of grade level content pacing guides that are standards-specific.
- Require the development of common assessments that are administered regularly, scored and evaluated at the grade and department level, and used to adjust decisions regarding instruction.
- Continue to support the integration of the Preliminary Scholastic Achievement Tests and the analysis of results in order to gain additional insights into students' strengths and deficits in the tested areas.
- Explore mechanisms to increase the capacity of after-school programs to support the academic achievement of participating students.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The Queens Gateway to Health Sciences Secondary School is poised to move swiftly and deliberately towards increasing the use of data to drive decision making and differentiating instruction. Recent professional development undertaken by the principal resulted in the development of a manifesto setting forth her vision for integrating curriculum, instruction and assessment. It describes a detailed plan and structure for accomplishing the changes needed to become a school that uses data to identify needs, create plans and measure progress. This comprehensive roadmap for school improvement was communicated to staff at the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year.

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 school uses City and State test results, Regents results, the scholarship report, attendance data, and cohort analyses to gain and maintain a general understanding of the progress of the school and its students. This is primarily regarding the percent of students at levels measured by State tests. Student score reports are shared with staff. Scholarship report data is used by administrators to analyze instructional effectiveness. Less emphasis is placed on performance at the grade level. The school does not regularly generate its own data with respect to student performance beyond typical practices of administering mid-term and final examinations and reporting students' course grades through report cards. It has, however, administered the Preliminary Scholastic Achievement Test (PSAT) to all students in grades nine through eleven for the last two years and is beginning to explore the uses of that data to deepen teachers' understanding of students' learning needs.

The institution's unique history as a health careers school founded, and partially funded, by a private corporation with a mission to serve African American students, influences the school's understanding of the various ethnic groups represented in the student body. The school is aware of the overall academic success of its groups and is conscious of the fact that some groups appear to succeed better than others. Many of the school's graduates select a health-related major in college. However, the school does not track the number of students who ultimately choose careers in the health sciences.

The school is aware of its performance over time and maintains a strong focus on continued annual improvement in the percent of students at levels 3 and 4 as its primary measure of progress. The school's unique configuration and focus limits comparisons with similar schools. Analysis of test data in the core academic areas is undertaken at the departmental level and tracked over time. Guidance counselors keep records of individual student's progress in courses and on State and City tests and follow their progress over the course of the six years most students spend in the school.

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 proficient.

The school leadership team, which includes a strong parent component, creates the Comprehensive Education Plan after thoroughly reviewing the available data and performing surveys of departments, parents and other relevant groups. The plan sets forth annual targets for improvement for the school as a whole, often expressed in percentage gains. While the plan does not contain short term goals, progress is discussed at monthly school leadership team meetings and at the parent teacher association’s executive board meetings. The principal’s annual goals reflect those embodied in the Comprehensive Education Plan, in addition to specific emphasis on moving the school towards implementing standards-based curricula, using assessments to drive instruction and increasing the differentiation of instruction.

Goals and plans focusing on each classroom or grade level are not a common feature of the school. For students whose attendance or classroom performance is problematic, guidance and attendance personnel work in concert with parents to create short term plans for monitoring and academic intervention. Their progress is reviewed on a monthly basis. Each student’s progress towards meeting graduation requirements is monitored by guidance counselors, who intervene if the students are not earning the necessary credits.

The school is vigilant with respect to its progress in mathematics and English language arts. When the analysis of students’ performance in English assessments revealed a weakness in students’ ability to respond to essay questions, the school instituted a program of regularly incorporating writing practice into every classroom. This initiative, ‘Everyone Stop and Write!’, emphasizes writing in the content area, and builds students’ skills in written expression. When students’ progress in mathematics did not show growth from grades seven to nine, the school formed a study group, created a more uniform curriculum, instituted uniform and regular assessments, and instituted the coaching model of instruction. This intervention resulted in an increase in students’ scores at levels 3 and 4 by over 20%.

The school’s mission expresses high expectations for student achievement and this value pervades the culture of the school. Even though this is a high performing school by all measures, the conversation of administrators, parents, teachers and students is characterized by references to academic achievement and success. Newsletters and bulletins communicate expectations for high academic achievement and the school recognizes student success through certificates, awards and the honor roll. The PSAT initiative is aimed, partially, at preparing students for merit scholarship awards. This unified aim for continued academic growth, while not a plan per se, is the force that drives the activity of all members of the school community.

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.

As an exempt school, the curriculum is driven by the State Standards and Regents and Advanced Placement test expectations, rather than by mandated instructional packages. The school does measure the effectiveness of its curriculum through the analysis of test scores and in working to ensure greater alignment with the standards to improve achievement, such as in mathematics as cited earlier in this report. The principal holds teachers accountable for student outcomes and addresses deficits revealed by the scholarship report or the analysis of marking period grades through individual conferences.

There is a growing expectation that teachers differentiate their instruction based upon their understanding of students’ needs. However, their understanding of student needs is limited to reports of students’ score levels and emerging information regarding tailoring instruction to various modalities. Students are generally well focused and do engage in paired or small group learning activities, but differentiation of instruction based on student needs is less apparent.

The principal considers the needs revealed by student achievement and the goals of the Comprehensive Education Plan when making budget, staffing and scheduling decisions. For instance, weakness in writing influenced the decision to hire a literacy coach and institute the initiative for writing across the curriculum. Academic intervention teachers were funded to support students scoring at level 2. To support students’ success in health science concentrations, time on task was increased by instituting rotating double blocks of mathematics and science that are integrated with grade level learning in the local hospital.

Students are supported in their academic, social and emotional growth by a caring staff of teachers, administrators and support personnel. They feel known and respected, and trust the adults in the building. Attendance at the school is routinely 94% and above. The school has an efficient attendance staff that responds quickly to student absence and tardiness by contacting the home and holding students responsible for attendance through the grading process.

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 well developed.

The principal is highly regarded by teachers, parents, students and her fellow administrator. She is admired for her vision and drive to make Queens Gateway the best school possible for all of its students. Her strong leadership provides focus for long term improvement and ensures that the school functions smoothly on a daily basis.

The principal holds high expectations for her staff and engages in rigorous hiring practices with her administrative staff to ensure that teachers new to the school are academically qualified, express an interest in working with the school’s population, and are willing to work hard. Less important in her hiring criteria is the candidate’s capacity to use data. The principal and assistant principals visit classrooms on an informal basis almost daily. The administrative team share responsibility for instructional leadership of the content

areas with the mathematics and literacy coaches, all of whom offer pedagogical suggestions to teachers. The school has instituted regular learning walks by the instructional team, made up of teachers, to increase knowledge of and support for developing strategies to increase student performance.

Professional development is embedded in the school day and is delivered by coaches, administrators and consultants. The administrative team, in consultation with coaches, consultants, the instructional team, the PSAT team and others, identifies topics of professional development based upon test scores, classroom observations, the Comprehensive Education Plan and recent City, regional or district initiatives. The principal's recent professional development project has sharpened the school's focus on the use of data to improve student achievement.

The school has partnerships with youth development and support services groups that provide after school programs for students. As yet, these activities are not designed to fully support the school's goals and the academic achievement of students.

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 undeveloped.

The operational plans in the school set forth annual whole school goals, but lack frequent interim goals. The school does not employ the use of diagnostic assessments to measure its progress towards meeting goals; rather, anecdotal data and discussion are relied upon to judge the attainment of goals.

The school does not routinely compare student progress across classrooms. Within classrooms, individual progress is tracked, but comparisons between individual students are not routine.

The school does not routinely use periodic assessments or diagnostic measures of progress to revise plans or measure progress, nor does it make use of assessment practices such as mid-term and final examinations to gain deeper understanding of the curriculum and instruction as measured by student performance.

While the school does respond to needs identified by test data, such as examples cited regarding writing and mathematics performance at grades seven through nine, actions are less driven by the interim or final goals embodied in plans than by needs that were identified through the routine oversight of the instructional program.

Further implementation of the principal's large-scale plan for moving the school towards data-driven decision-making, standards-based curriculum and instruction, and differentiated instruction is required before this aspect is judged proficient.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Queens Gateway to Health Sciences Secondary School (IS/HS 680)	∅	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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		