



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Queens Valley School**

**Elementary-Middle School 164**

**138 – 01 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11367**

**Principal: Anne Alfonso**

**Dates of review: October 15 - 16, 2007**

**Lead Reviewer: Roger Fry**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Queens Valley School is a combined elementary and middle school with 633 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 9% Black, 32% Hispanic, 36% White, and 23% Asian and Pacific Islander students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance for the school year 2006-2007 is 95%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 100% eligibility.

The school is one of only three schools in the district to combine elementary and middle school students. The first grade 8 graduated in June 2007.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well.

- There is a clear vision for the school's continuing improvement from the principal and senior team.
- The school has assessed the quality of its work realistically by comparing itself with other similar schools and has set suitable targets for improvement.
- In lessons, teachers manage students well and set clear goals for students to reach.
- Teachers have a clear understanding of the performances of groups, special education students and English language learners.
- Teachers check which elements of the curriculum have not been learned so that they can be re-taught.
- Inexperienced teachers are well supported by the coaches.
- All teachers' work is checked and they receive constructive feedback, which helps to improve teaching and learning.
- Teachers' professional development helps them meet their goals for improvement.
- Attendance is a strength because the school encourages good attendance and students enjoy school.

### Areas for development

- Refine the use of assessment data to ensure that teachers use differentiated tasks in lessons that are well matched to all student achievement levels.
- Ensure staff receive the necessary training to use the new student tracking system successfully.
- Ensure that students in all classes are clear what the next small step in their learning is.
- Improve teachers' capacity to update their records quickly by putting all student progress data on information technology.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Progress made since the last review

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

### Overall Evaluation

#### This school is proficient.

Queens Valley has made good progress with four of the five areas for development identified in the last review. Improvement has come about because the school has assessed its work realistically. Staff orientation and training have high priority. This has meant that staff have improved their skills. They have looked more closely at the school's data and have taken greater account of individual students' needs. Regular checks on the quality of instruction in lessons have helped teachers teach more effectively. In meetings, teachers discuss which aspects of the curriculum need to be re-taught, so that there are no gaps in students' knowledge.

The principal and senior staff provide clear leadership, which has led to improvement. The school is embarking on using the new student tracking system. The inquiry team has made a satisfactory start and has identified students who are ready for a further acceleration of their progress. The school has a clear view of its overall targets for student achievement. An important area for development is the training of all teachers in the use of the student tracking system, and the attendant written guidance to help them have immediate success in using the system.

Instruction has several good elements, such as teachers' capacity to explain ideas, which causes students to make good progress. In some lessons, however, high achieving students do not always have enough activities to challenge them. Teachers keep comprehensive records of what their students know, understand and can do, although they do not always communicate the next small steps in learning to them.

### 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 well developed.

The school has made good progress since the last review in gathering data on all students. Case studies of students' work show how widely this data extends. Teachers' knowledge of students' capabilities has improved. Consequently, students this year met the target for average yearly progress. Comparisons with other similar schools have helped the administration judge the school's performance realistically.

The school identifies special education students carefully. Teachers responsible for this group of students look carefully at their progress and at which interventions have worked

best for them. Programming for students has improved. For example, a reading program successfully helps students learn to read faster. Because of the work done over the last year, a quarter of special education students made exemplary progress. All students who are learning English receive close attention. Teachers identify their needs clearly through tests and observations and give extra assistance in small groups to help them converse more easily.

Teachers regularly update comprehensive assessment binders. These binders contain large amounts of useful data about every student, such as their level of reading comprehension. Teachers also use gains reports that show which students have made good progress, or not, to shape the way they teach lessons. The school has enough data in a usable form to ensure that underachievers in any group have their needs met. Teachers have initially identified 15 students for extra attention this year to accelerate their progress. Teachers record some of the data on paper, which is less easy to use to examine trends or to share with other staff. The next stage in the school's plans for accelerating student progress is training for staff on the new student tracking system, which will make student data easier to access. The school's use of class, grade level and individual student data is an area for development.

**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 staff work together effectively to review students' progress against the milestones that are set for the curriculum over the year. This process is most successful at the individual student level. The school has comprehensive data about students' progress, particularly in English and math. Queens Valley has begun to use the new student tracking system alongside its own data to identify students who are underachieving or are close to reaching the next level in their work. The leadership has identified a group of 35 students who are most likely to cross the threshold from one level to the next. Teachers are planning to make sure that students have the best opportunity to do this by setting them interim goals, so that the school can reach its target for accelerating student progress.

This new initiative is in addition to the extra small group work made available for students who are most in need. The school administration and coaches realize how important accelerating students' rate of progress is. They have spent the last year training teachers in better teaching techniques and in raising teachers' expectations of students. Not all students know their next small steps for learning. Some do, and they can explain exactly what it is they need to learn next in English and math. This knowledge, which is well developed in some students and is discussed in conferences, allows them to improve their work faster.

Several report cards a year go hand-in-hand with parent conferences and parents feel well informed. The school provides parents with a lot of information about how well their children are performing, such as scores and comments on student progress. Parents say they find this information useful when helping their children at home with homework, and to give general encouragement to work hard at school.

**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.**

Within grade, subject and faculty meetings, teachers examine in close detail how well students have learned different elements of the various subjects. They look at their student level assessments and build into their plans for future lessons those areas that have not been understood by some students. They also acknowledge those elements that have been well understood and move on quickly to the next area to be taught. These checks help to accelerate student learning.

Teachers manage students well and explain clearly to them what they need to do. Within the teaching groups, there are well-developed examples of small group work. Students make good progress because the targets they have are well matched to the next steps they need to make in their learning. However, this method of organization within classes is not always present. The high achieving students, in some instances, do not have enough work that challenges them, causes them to ask questions, and to get stuck and to need help. The teaching is not making the most of this group of students' capacity to learn. The administration through its analysis of data, has noticed that some students working at the highest level in some grades have slipped back slightly.

Evidence from the school's monitoring of teaching shows that students are well engaged in their work in the majority of lessons. Students enjoy their schooling and the above average attendance figures show that students enjoy coming to school. The school has effective and consistent procedures to monitor attendance. The arts are an important emphasis for the school. Students clearly enjoy their work in dance and art. Their enjoyment helps them engage better with other subjects. The school also offers Spanish.

**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 administration regularly checks on the quality of instruction throughout the school. As a result, the Grade 8 curriculum is embedding well. A recent focus for attention has been the quality of teachers' bulletin boards. Teachers have had helpful feedback, which has improved the quality of the displays of students' work. Students have class goals and teaching points reinforced in this way.

Inexperienced teachers receive a good program of support. They meet together regularly and share ideas, discuss what worked well and what did not. The coaches have a particularly strong influence with this group of teachers. The coaches make sure that their differentiated program of training and support covers all the main aspects of teaching and that teachers improve. The school has a good culture of giving praise where it is due. This process of rewarding teachers for good work creates a pleasant working environment where all can feel they have an important part to play.

Key teaching staff model lessons for other teachers to see. The school also ensures that staff have opportunities to go to workshops away from the school to learn new skills. In this way the instruction improves, such use of the workshop system of teaching. A key

area for staff training is in the use of the new student tracking system. The administration is well aware that teachers need clear technology guidance in order to make the system work quickly and efficiently for them. The school is beginning to grasp the potential of this tool for accelerating learning.

The administration takes on board quickly what it learns from evaluation exercises. As a result of the positive attitude toward change, earlier diagnosis of the needs of children with special education needs was put into action some time ago. The school has also identified that the planning link between the extra mandated lessons for some students who need extra practice outside the school day and those during the school day could be stronger, to ensure that students' learning is as consistent as it can be.

**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 proficient.**

The principal and senior staff have a clear vision for the development of the use of school data, based on the new student tracking system. The school expects every student to make average year's growth or more each year. The administration has calculated that if 35 extra students make one level improvement upwards over the next year, this will allow the school to meet its whole school progress target. From the student level data, teachers in classes and grades have targets to move students upwards, such as when students are going to learn which skills. These targets are backed up by goals for the teaching, such as how to group students and differentiate their work. Teaching targets are supported by checks on the quality of instruction. This approach is coherent and is clear evidence that the school flexibly adapts its methods in order to meet its overall goals.

Teachers have targets to meet to improve their instructional skills. Because of regular checks on lessons, the 'workshop' way of teaching has been strengthened. Rubrics to help students know whether they have been successful or not in their work have been re-emphasized. Teachers have clear time frames in which to improve the quality of their work when needed. However, differentiated activities are not organized well enough in some whole class settings so that the most able make good progress with work that challenges them. The work of the teams of teachers who keep a close watch on the performances of students with special educational needs, or who are learning English is effective. Special education students have performed particularly well recently.

The administration checks the performances of the grades and the degree to which students make expected progress. Teachers respond when students are having difficulty with an aspect of the curriculum, such as characterization in English. This was found to be too difficult for one group and the curricular plans were altered to take account of this, by allowing more time for this activity.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Queens Valley School (PS 164)</b>	△	▶	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>			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 . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				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 . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, 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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			X		

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>▶</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X		

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>▶</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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?			X		
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X		

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>▶</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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 make 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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X		