



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**The Queens College School for Math, Science and
Technology**

Elementary/Middle School 499

**148 - 20 Reeves Avenue
Queens
NY 11367**

Principal: Anastasia Schneider

Dates of review: January 24 - 25, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Roy Storrs

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Information about the school

The Queens College School for Math, Science and Technology, is an elementary/middle school with 474 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 43% Black, 18% Hispanic, 6% White, and 33% Asian / Pacific Islander students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students on roll and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 96.5%. The school does not receive Title 1 funding.

This is a unique school, operating under a Memorandum of Understanding between Queens College and the New York City Department of Education. As a blind lottery school it supports students from seven local districts in Queens. It occupies a purpose-designed building with excellent facilities, part of which is used by District 75 students.

Unfortunately, the principal was in hospital at the time of the review. The assistant principal made all the arrangements and represented the principal throughout the review. Although she had strong support from the network leader and a retired principal, she was a praiseworthy advocate for the school. The principal's devotion to the school was demonstrated by her being involved in a telephone conference discussion from her hospital bed during the review.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal, admirably supported by her loyal cabinet, has done an exceptional job in leading the school's very successful development.
- This is a data-rich school, which uses a myriad of information very effectively to promote student achievement and progress.
- The diligent, professional and enthusiastic teachers are adept at planning and goal setting on the basis of firm data.
- The skilful and experienced counselor makes a highly significant contribution to the students' lives in effectively complementing the work of the faculty across the school.
- Imaginative cross-curricular planning enables students to appreciate the natural links between separate subject disciplines.
- The extensive aesthetic program provides incomparable enrichment experiences for students.
- Exceptionally warm and trusting relationships between staff and students underpin the industrious learning atmosphere.
- Invaluable partnerships with the Queens College Department of Education and the Lincoln Centre Institute further augment students' cultural and intellectual growth.
- The school's very high expectations are evident in the orderly and attractive learning environment, impressively augmented by excellent displays of students' work.
- Rigorous monitoring procedures ensure the school's continued improvement.

What the school needs to improve

- Involve students more directly in their own learning by setting them personal short-term curricular goals.
- Provide more opportunities for teachers to observe one another to spread the excellent instruction which is highly focused and briskly paced.
- Improve further the information given to parents by completing the partly-written parents' handbook.

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 well developed.

The principal has done an exceptional job in leading the school's very successful development. Her orderly study, with its wonderful examples of high quality art work and calligraphy, epitomizes her belief in expecting the highest standards, which is reflected throughout the school. The principal is admirably assisted by her loyal cabinet, comprising the well-qualified assistant principal and experienced guidance counselor. The collection and analysis of data are firmly embedded throughout the school, and the professional faculty uses the information effectively to plan and set goals and to provide differentiated instruction. However, students are not sufficiently involved in setting their personal short-term curricular goals. Students have a thorough grounding in essential basic skills, while useful cross-curricular links and an incomparable range of aesthetic experiences further enrich their lives. Students benefit from some exceptional instruction, although other teachers do not have sufficient opportunity to learn from such practice. Their academic and personal growth is assured by the skilful counseling coupled with engaging instruction. The exceptionally warm, trusting and industrious atmosphere is a highlight of the school. The school's excellent facilities are kept immaculate and provide an orderly and interesting learning environment in which staff and students enjoy extremely good relationships. Robust monitoring procedures keep the school on track. As a result of the staff's commitment and sheer hard work, the principal's passion for achieving excellence within a community of learners is fully understood and supported, and well on its way to fruition. The school has successfully resolved all issues identified in the previous report. The inquiry team has found the exercise of focusing on 10 students achieving below Level 2 to be invaluable, not least because the school had already been working in a similar way for the past 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 the student's progress over time.

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

This is a data-rich school, which uses a myriad of information very effectively to promote student achievement and progress. Numerous test scores and data related to students' attendance, attitudes and backgrounds build up a detailed profile of each student. This

information, gathered from a variety of sources is stored, analyzed and utilized effectively by the administration and faculty. Some of it is made available in neatly organized binders related to specific groups of students. Each teacher maintains an assessment binder keeping them constantly up-to-date with their students' attainment and progress. Much data is stored electronically and overseen effectively by the assistant principal. All early years' teachers are adept at using palm-held devices to monitor in meticulous detail their students' progress in aspects of literacy. A similar system is used more extensively by several teachers in higher grades who, as a result, have every piece of data about their students, literally at their finger tips.

The persistent review of data also enables the school to track carefully its special education students, who also have detailed individual education plans, and the small number of students who are English language learners. The administration's data analysis has identified no startling differences in the performance of the various ethnic groups; it has revealed the fact that socio-economic circumstance is a more significant factor, leading to intervention. Because the data-gathering process is on-going, the school follows its own progress year-on-year, showing that achievement has risen consistently and that special education students have made particularly good progress. As a result, the State has recognized the school as one achieving the dual goal of increasing achievement while closing the gap in student performance. The school's success in gathering and using data is due to the considerable amount of intensive training for staff provided in school and by external consultants.

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 well developed.

The administration and faculty excel in collaborating to use all available data to plan and set appropriate goals. At whole school level, the principal has set ambitious goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan. In each grade, individual teachers, with the principal, set personal goals against which they are assessed at the end of the year. Common preparation time and an additional period per teacher, to monitor progress, enable the diligent teachers to plan together regularly within grade teams and to enjoy informative links with teachers in grades above and below. These arrangements successfully ensure the progressive development of skills across grades. While student goals are set, the students themselves are not directly involved in their own learning by having, for instance, personal short-term curricular goals to which they can work. All operational teams, such as the academic intervention services and cabinet, work to precise rubrics, have clear agenda, and maintain detailed minutes. This comprehensive approach is successful in tracking each student's progress and ensuring that those in greatest need receive explicit intensive support.

The administration explains its goals clearly to faculty at regular in-school conferences and via the comprehensive staff handbook. The school shares these goals with the community as a whole in a variety of ways, such as meetings and workshops with parents, informative newsletters from each grade level, and the school's interesting website. Through the same mechanisms, the school's very high expectations, which are evident in the orderly and attractive learning environment, impressively augmented by excellent displays of students' work, are actively promoted. Beyond the usual reporting

procedures, the school's open-door policy has forged close links with its many supportive parents, ensuring they are able to share information regularly about their children's attainment and progress. Some teachers go to great lengths to support their students further through telephone and email conversations with individual parents. In wanting to improve further the information given to parents, the school is preparing a comprehensive handbook.

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 well developed.

The principal's strongly held belief that the school must nurture the whole child drives curricular provision. Essential skills of literacy and math are taught thoroughly. The other mandated subjects are made interesting by imaginative cross-curricular planning which enables students to appreciate the natural links between separate subject disciplines. In addition, teachers ensure learning is strengthened by making it relevant and, where possible, practical, as in science where students engage in challenging experiments. The extensive aesthetic program provides incomparable enrichment experiences for students. Opportunities to engage in the visual and performing arts, talent periods in grade 8, visits to exhibitions and exposure to professional performers at the Lincoln Centre are significant experiences in the students' lives. The pupils delight in demonstrating their talent in performing to a high standard in the orchestra, band and regular shows.

The professional and enthusiastic faculty understand their accountability. They aspire to the Californian standards of teaching and do all they can to make their lessons interesting. In-house training and that provided by a consultant on differentiation strategies has helped embed this effective form of instruction. This has been facilitated further by teachers using data to group students according to their achievement so that instruction meets their individual needs. The principal is skilled at making strategic financial, staffing and schedule decisions to provide the best for her students. This is exemplified by the effective academic support programs, by her hiring first rate teachers and, recently, an experienced retired principal to focus on promoting teachers' pedagogical skills. The exceptionally warm, trusting and industrious atmosphere is a highlight of the school. The teachers form a great team, they enjoy working together and their enthusiasm spills over to the students, with whom they enjoy exceptionally good relationships. As a result, students enjoy school and attendance is extremely high.

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 well developed.

Improving the quality of instruction is at the heart of the principal's endeavor. She hires open-minded teachers who want to learn and improve their practice. The rigorous approach to observations by the principal, assistant principal and part-time retired principal underpins these improvements. It celebrates success and identifies areas for

improvement, which are addressed by a well-conceived program of professional development. This comprises whole-faculty conferences to set the overall tone, input from consultants, one-to-one support and individual teachers attending training at several academic institutions. The constant aim is to differentiate professional development to meet school and individual needs. While opportunities to observe each others' practice exist, the school recognizes the value of extending the practice, to spread the examples of excellent instruction which is highly focused and briskly paced. New teachers to the school feel warmly welcomed, valued as professionals and well supported through a range of strategies.

The school's excellent facilities are kept in immaculate order and a sense of stability prevails due to the expectation that everyone follows the set procedures. The skilful and experienced guidance counselor makes a highly significant contribution to the students' academic and personal welfare in effectively complementing the work of the faculty. Having been at the school since its inception he knows all the students and is a valuable member of the cabinet and other key teams. The enviable relationship with Queens College Department of Education, which is on the same campus, is a significant benefit to the school. An interface team, with representatives from school and college, serves as a 'think tank' to make best use of the unique relationship. Particularly valuable activities are professors providing training for teachers, and the college students gaining practical experience by working alongside teachers. As a Lincoln Centre Institute focus school, teachers and students are infused with aesthetic educational philosophies and methodologies which have a remarkable impact across the whole curriculum.

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 well developed.

The school believes that planning, goal setting and monitoring are inseparable procedures which enable administration and faculty to measure their success and adjust programs if need be. Thus the monitoring regime is robust and on-going. Monitoring procedures include scrutiny by various clearly focused committees, regular grade level analysis of test scores and teachers maintaining detailed assessment binders. Many teachers make exceptionally good use of hand-held electronic devices to collate all test scores and other data on their students. Teachers gain detailed knowledge of the students through periodic assessments, scrutiny of their work and observation of their behavior and attitudes. This data enables teachers to monitor the effectiveness of their work and to ensure that instructional programs are appropriate and effective. The diligent and professional teachers are fully aware of their personal accountability. They appreciate that the administration's observations of their classroom instruction and scrutiny of their students' grades constantly monitor their effectiveness. As a consequence, teachers make optimum use of the information they gain to gauge the impact of their work, revise plans accordingly and thus drive the next stage of planning and goal setting. These rigorous monitoring procedures, aimed at achieving the school's vision of excellence within a community of learners, ensure the ever-improving effectiveness of this high-achieving school.

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?				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