



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Queens Occupational Training Center**

**High School 721**

**57-12 94 Street**

**Queens**

**NY 11373**

**Principal: Madelaine Hassell**

**Dates of review: May 29 - 30, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Jeffery Plumb**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Queens Occupational Training Center is a high school with 441 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 30% Black, 38% Hispanic, 16% White, and 16% Asian students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 59% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007-2008 was 84%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

This is a multi-sited organization with a non-graded program for students aged 13 to 21 with significant to severe disabilities who require a high level of support. Some students are non-ambulatory. All students participate in alternate assessments. The main site serves students in classes of 12:1:1, 8:1:1, 6:1:1, and 12:1:4, student to teacher to paraprofessional ratio. The site provides self contained classes for bilingual and English language learners. Many students participate in a work study program and are off-site for four or five days a week.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The determined and visionary principal is an effective instructional leader.
- Action planning to manage change is based on rigorous analysis of data and is very effective.
- Teachers analyze student assessment data carefully to differentiate their instruction.
- Teachers make learning relevant, challenging and fun for the students.
- Detailed systems effectively track student progress over time.
- New, engaging reading schemes have significantly raised students' comprehension skills.
- The coach provides high quality professional development for teachers.
- The work study program is very good and develops students work skills well.
- Effective teamwork between the related services and teaching staff benefits students considerably.
- The quality of care and dignity shown to students by is exceptional in this school which runs very smoothly.

### What the school needs to improve

- With the support of the therapeutic related services improve technology and in particular the range of switches to remove barriers to learning, which exist for some students.
- Enhance the sensory environment for students with the most complex needs to improve the quality of provision for them.

## 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.**

This is an effective school. The principal has a long tenure with this school. She, along with her administrative team and staff, has created a highly supportive environment with a well-structured, functional instructional program for fragile students. Administration has been vigilant in addressing the recommendations from the previous quality review to plan for improvement. It has been successful in managing the introduction of effective tracking of student progress over time and has enabled teachers to become confident in the use of student performance data to differentiate their instruction. The inquiry team has successfully piloted two reading programs, which have raised students' achievement significantly. Parents are right when they say, "This school is awesome in what it does for our children and for us." The principal is an effective instructional leader. The knowledgeable and experienced coach delivers precisely targeted professional development based on students' needs. Teachers are confident in using data to differentiate their instruction. Consequently, they make learning for students relevant, challenging and fun. The learning environment is stimulating, but students with the most complex needs do not have a sensory room and this impedes what can be achieved for them. The whole school community supports the vision of maximum independence for all students, but students with the most complex needs do not yet experience work opportunities in the community.

The quality of care shown to students is exceptional and each student is treated with the utmost dignity. The related services work effectively with the teaching staff. Administration, faculty and related services do all they can to promote student independence. However, limited technology is a barrier to learning for a small number of students. Switches are not always suitably adapted to student needs, particularly for cognitively able, non-ambulant students. This impedes the development of their independent mobility. Similarly, eating utensils are not always adapted to help students with motor skills difficulties and this slows their development of independent feeding. Administration and therapists recognize this and are at times frustrated by the lack of funds to effect important changes. The school monitors its work very thoroughly and uses findings from this exercise to plan improvements.

All newly admitted students attend PS 721 at Info Tech High School for one year in a 12:1:1 setting. Students then transition to the main site. There are two inclusion programs. One is at a High School for Arts and Business which fully integrates students into mainstream classes with the support of paraprofessionals. Another is at Queens College. It enables select students to attend college and participate in community-based instruction. Paraprofessionals travel with students throughout the day. Assistance to ensure suitable placement and continuation of services is provided for parents and caregivers of aging out students. The principal has a long tenure with this school. She,

along with her administrative team and staff, has created a highly supportive environment with a well-structured, functional instructional program for fragile students.

### **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 gathers an extensive range of quantitative and qualitative data which indicates what students know and can do. Diagnostic tools are carefully matched to the students' level of need. For example, the reading skills of lower functioning autistic students are assessed using the Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills, whereas the comprehension skills of higher functioning autistic students are assessed using Lexia. The reading ability of students in 12:1:1 classes is assessed. This data is used effectively to track students' progress in reading over time, as shown in their binders. Task analysis data on students feeding skills enables staff to track their progress and to move them to a less restrictive feeding environment. Good use is made of behavior data to track students' improvement in behavior. It is used to set their behavior plans which are carefully monitored.

English language learners receive the mandated test. Data about reading skills is gathered by ethnic groups and it is used to track progress. Gender data is gathered and used in planning a balance in class groups. Data about behavior and students ability to communicate independent choices, such as what they would like for breakfast, is gathered across classes. The school compares itself with similar schools and uses data from visits to other schools to shape and improve its programs. Small groups of teachers meet and use data to pilot and evaluate new programs before they turnkey them to the whole staff. Currently a new math program is being piloted.

**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.**

Every student has an individual education plan with time-lined milestone objectives to reach their end of year goals. Where it is evident that a student makes rapid progress an individual education planning meeting is called early and more challenging goals are set to accelerate progress. Where a student is struggling, a collaborative pupil planning team is called to review data about the student to determine the support and interventions required. This may be triggered by behavioral concerns although behavioral data is never examined in isolation from academic data. The administration recognizes that a group may kick off and misbehave in a subject class because the instruction does not meet their needs and so review the instruction for that group of students.

Students in the 12:1:4 class have very complex needs. Staff give them trials and analyze data to determine whether to move them to a less restrictive environment. Whole school goals are shared effectively through cohort meetings and professional

development activities. High expectations are shared with students through schedules and routines being displayed on classroom walls. As part of the TEACCH program every autistic student has an individual picture schedule. The school shares its high expectations with parents through annual individual education plan meetings, report cards and a daily communication book which goes between home and school. Parents have many opportunities to share information about the ways in which their children learn. The school surveyed parents of autistic students to help it plan to meet their needs.

**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 core curriculum is aligned to the alternate assessment standards. Innovative reading programs have been introduced to accelerate student learning. The Lexia program identifies specific reading difficulties experienced by high achieving autistic students and helps raise their achievement significantly. The work study program benefits the majority of students, but parents of students with the most complex needs are right when they say, “Our children would benefit from work study placements.” The customized programs in woodwork shop, culinary arts and music promote enjoyment in learning. Students with very complex needs have specific programs to promote their independence. The related services work closely with teachers to ensure pupils are positioned correctly for feeding. However, the sensory experiences of students with very complex needs could be increased. Insufficient modified switches are made available to cognitively non-ambulant students, to increase their independent mobility.

Teachers are held to account through thorough lesson observations conducted by the administration. They are given quality feedback on how to improve their instruction. Differentiated instruction is based on thorough analysis of data about each student. Carefully considered budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions are based on data analysis. For example, funding is being targeted to the best reading programs. The quality of care and the respect and dignity shown to students are exceptional. Parents are right when they say, “The care our children receive is awesome.” Attendance fluctuates from year to year because the medical needs of the students vary, but the systems to promote regular attendance are robust.

**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.**

Targeted professional development for teachers based on data lies at the heart of this successful school. Administration undertakes regular and thorough lesson observations, followed by detailed feedback to teachers to help them improve differentiation in their instruction. Through this process, the administration identifies teachers who require support and development. The coach then works effectively alongside them in class, thus providing them with one-to-one professional development. The administration also

enables teachers to visit to other schools to help them sharpen their instruction to accelerate student learning. Common planning time for teachers working with the same population of students enables them to meet regularly and plan collaboratively. The induction of new teachers is very good.

Each related service has its own schedule and increasingly there is a push in model approach. However, although working in partnership with teachers is increasingly effective it is not yet good enough. Therapy integral to the curriculum is good, but sometimes there is still too much pull out for related services work. Switches to manipulate wheelchairs and more modified utensils for feeding are improving independence in mobility and feeding, but administration acknowledges that this is a work in progress. The school runs like clockwork because expectations are clear and decisions and changes are made by the principal following consultation with all stakeholders. Links with a wide range of external agencies enhance the work study program considerably.

**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.**

A thorough monitoring program enables the school to monitor its work rigorously. The school's Comprehensive Education Plan has long-term goals focused on improving instruction and student achievement. The milestones and time-lined objectives to reach these goals are clear and funded. Consequently, the planning leads to improvement. It is regularly monitored and modified immediately to effect rapid change to bring about improvement. Achievement for each student is driven by the individual education plan model which has long-term goals and stepped objectives along the route. As soon as objectives are met immediate action is taken to set more challenging goals. Conversely, when a student is not progressing staff immediately review and modify his academic and social development goals. This process triggers the provision of tightly focused intervention programs.

Diagnostic tools and periodic assessments to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions to raise achievement in communication, independence and mathematical skills are very good. Consequently students succeed in these areas. Analysis of achievement data based on periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools is used effectively by administration to improve student outcomes. The principal's vision and steely determination to enable each student develop vital life skills to be as independent as possible in life, is shared by the whole school community. Never complacent, she and her fellow administrators are always looking for ways to improve further.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Queens Occupational Training Center</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<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.**

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

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

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

<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?					X
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
<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, and effectively address discipline related incidents?					X
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
<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 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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					X

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>