

# Quality Review Report 2009-2010

**Queens Academy High School**

**High School 540  
138-11 35 Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11354**

**Principal: Beverly Short**

**Dates of review: May 17 - 18, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Kenneth Forman**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Queens Academy is a high school with 432 students from grade 10 through grade 12. The school is situated on two sites within Queens, Flushing, and Jamaica. The school population comprises 43% Black, 38% Hispanic, 6% White, and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 72.9%.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is well developed.**

The Queens Academy High School is a grade 10 through grade 12 transfer high school that has a safe and nurturing environment and students enjoy attending. The customized curriculum meets the needs of students and enables them to achieve credit accumulation at an accelerated pace. The dynamic and visible principal is part of the collaborative nature of the school that provides students with a rigorous and engaging curriculum that is aligned vertically and horizontally. The professional learning community uses a variety of assessments to monitor student progress and keeps aware of changes in attendance and behavior. School leaders and teachers use assessment data to make informed instructional and organizational decisions to revise student-learning goals and organizational structures throughout the school year. However, although teachers have access to a plethora of data, it is inconsistently used to differentiate instruction to maximize student learning.

Professional development linked to inquiry is integral to the school's success. Individualized professional development by teachers' needs maximizes student-learning opportunities. Teacher teams regularly assess students' work, revise curricula, and study individual student strengths and needs. School leaders help to plan collaborative next steps to improve student performance, yet the school has not yet established a mechanism to communicate student progress to students and their families in order to regularly view their performance and determine next steps. School resources align with instructional goals so that student-learning opportunities including credit recovery and supplemental programs before, during, and after school maximize learning outcomes. At the same time, the school recognizes the importance of focusing on social and emotional needs of students and their families and uses its extensive partnerships to support student learning.

A caring principal, whom students admire and trust, leads the school. Classroom observations and follow-up conversations become opportunities for dialogue around pedagogy. School leaders conduct informal observations, regular walk throughs, and facilitate monthly learning walks to promote professional learning growth. Although administrators and teachers work collaboratively to align professional development with school wide goals, a systemic mechanism of teacher goal setting is lacking thus missing the opportunity for them to have full ownership and self-reflect on their work.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders and staff use a variety of tools to organize and evaluate a wide range of data to understand students' strengths and needs and develop appropriate instructional interventions based upon that data.
  - Formative and summative data, including ACUITY, ARIS, teacher-made assessments, student portfolios, scholarship reports, Regents' results, and credit accumulation reports, develop a clear picture of student performance, needs, and trends. Thusly, school leaders and staff adjust instructional strategies and classroom practices to meet the identified areas of need of individuals and subgroup populations to maximize their learning.
  - Review of relevant data by ethnic sub-group, and that for English language learners, and special education students, supports identifying and monitoring their progress. The communication of cohort data to teachers and teacher teams provides an opportunity to understand classroom performance trends. As a result, assessment rubrics along with regular evaluations of performance, inform instruction that meets all students' needs.
- Administrators and teachers work cohesively to analyze data with consistency and evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional, and organizational decisions to refine practice to meet students' needs.
  - A consultant from the State Education Department worked with teachers in examining one student subgroup identified as underachieving in math. School leaders and teachers analyzed formative and summative data with the consultant so that suitable intervention plans, pacing calendars, and on-going assessments were put in place to support student success. The school improvement team evaluated these intervention mechanisms to determine their impact on the instructional program.
  - In order to support academic rigor and student engagement, teachers create and analyze assessments using an Understanding by Design framework. School leaders and teachers meet regularly using this methodology to evaluate school-wide goals, look at performance data, and adjust curricular practices. As a result, teachers make informed decisions as to what skills need reinforcement and what practices need adjustment.
- School leaders provide a variety of individualized professional development activities that meet teacher needs and maximize student learning.
  - Professional development activities align with school goal setting and are sensitive to individual teacher needs. The school provides training by both in-house specialists and external consultants in writing, Understanding by Design, literature circles, strategies for student success on high-stakes testing, teacher self-reflection, and belief system development. As a result, teachers capitalize on these varied learning opportunities and incorporate strategies into pedagogy that supports students' success across subject areas.

- A full-time Assistant Principal provides training in the use of literature circles, portfolios for student writing, how to participate in learning walks, and looking at assessments. This is directly affecting instruction by accelerating student achievement and credit accumulation.
- The principal and administrative staff provide clear leadership to provide resources that align with the school's instructional goals and meet students' needs.
  - The after-school credit recovery program, the period-one learning strategies program, and college test preparation program, effectively and strategically apply resources that meet student needs.
  - The principal's well-planned budget is supportive of many worthwhile initiatives. The purchase and use of Smartboards, the development of after school programs, and customized professional development, are well matched and accommodate the needs of students and staff.
- School leaders, teachers, and students exhibit a warm and respectful relationship, resulting in an environment that is conducive to learning and supportive of student growth.
  - The school maintains a family-like environment that motivates the students to succeed. Teachers and administrators display a genuine concern for the academic and social well-being of students and ensure a safe learning environment.
  - The positive school culture is characterized by a high degree of student engagement in most classes. Students benefit from smaller class size allowing teachers to interact more closely with them. Students indicated that they feel school leaders and teachers hear their voice so they become active learners and take charge of their education.
- Partnerships with community-based organizations promote students' academic, social-emotional, and health needs and support students' academic success.
  - Partnerships with community-based organizations such as La Guardia Community College, Latimer Community Center, Latimer House, Hart Island Project, NYU Saturday Arts, and Pratt Institute, students are provided with activities that encourage personal and academic growth. For example, the Saturday arts program at New York University has produced accomplished student artists who now aspire to continue studying the arts in college.
  - By using outside consultants, the school provides staff with professional development that enhances students' social emotional learning. This training reinforces students' belief systems and encourages students to be academically successful.
- School leaders and teacher teams analyze a variety of data using multiple measures of assessment to create clear, focused student achievement goals aimed at accelerating student learning. (3.1)
  - The school's uses data, classroom observations, and organizational practices to analyze student outcomes so that instruction aligns with

students' needs. This has resulted in the development of action plans to improve math achievement for relevant subgroups of students, improve school-wide attendance, raise Regents' pass rates, and increase credit accumulation.

- Through on-going conferencing and follow-up by staff, students are aware of their credit accumulation needs so that attendance and achievement are constantly reinforced and celebrated, thus ensuring student success.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Ensure that differentiated instruction is evident in all instruction to accommodate different learning styles and optimize student achievement
  - The school focuses on using the Understanding by Design model in all classrooms. However, classroom observations reveal that not all teachers are differentiating instruction. As a result, some teachers unevenly address learning needs of their students and miss creating multiple entry points.
  - While the school accurately assesses its students and knows their strengths and needs, classroom instruction is inconsistent and does not address individual learning styles. Teachers do not yet organize their lessons to meet the needs of individual students.
- Provide consistent, detailed feedback to parents and students with reasons for success while identifying precise next steps for improvement.
  - Parents and students do not receive systemic mid-marking period progress reports. This limits the information available to parents and restricts opportunities for their involvement.
  - Although teachers provide feedback to students about their strengths and needs, they do not consistently explain to them what learning steps they have to pursue to achieve their goals. The school has yet to develop a system for setting and disseminating data informed goals for all subgroups so that teachers can develop additional supports for targeted students.
- Create a planning process to develop teachers' goals that are monitored and analyzed regularly and are aligned with professional development so that the quality of instruction is elevated and student performance increases.
  - Currently, there are no structures in place to scrutinize and monitor individual teacher goal setting. This lack of a protocol precludes teachers from having full ownership for their individual professional learning which links with student achievement.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Queens Academy High School	Δ	▶	✓	+
Overall QR Score				X
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	Δ	▶	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?				X
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X
<b>Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	▶	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?				X
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?				X
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X			
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?				X			
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?				X			
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?				X			
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X			
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X			
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?				X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>