

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Queens Vocational and Technical High School

High School 600

37-02 47 Avenue

Queens

NY 11101

Principal: Denise Vittor

Dates of review: March 8 - 9, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Cheryl Jones

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Queens Vocational and Technical High School is a high school with 1317 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 10% Black, 71% Hispanic, 10% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 62% of the students enrolled and girls account for 38%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 86.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Queens Vocational and Technical High School provides a supportive, respectful and personalized learning environment because of the five small learning communities (SLC) established in 2005 (9th grade was established in 2004). The academies are highly focused on using a wide range of data to meet student's needs and this is evident throughout the school. An impressive variety of over 50 partnerships supports academic and personal growth, which is having a direct impact on attendance and graduation rates. Parents and students agree with sentiments expressed by teachers that "SLCs allow us to have ownership of our students". However, the high levels of rigor and challenge are not yet fully consistent in all classrooms especially for the higher achieving students. The passion and commitment of the principal promotes a shared vision, so that goals and steps needed for improvement are widely known and embraced, resulting in improvements in attendance, scholarship and credit accumulation.

Leaders allocate resources to budget, staffing and hiring which effectively support the specialized needs of each SLC. A team assigned to each cohort monitors and evaluates the achievement and progress of all students as well as a target group. This is particularly effective in improving credit accumulation among grade 9 students. An excellent range of formal and informal data provides administrators and staff with precise information about student achievement and this facilitates a clear understanding of student progress and performance, resulting in a graduation rate increase of over 20% between 2008 and 2009. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of student progress ensures that the school can make interim adjustments, positively impacting on student scholarship. Although most subject areas use benchmarks and rubrics to enable students to understand their precise next steps for improvement, this is not yet fully consistent across the school.

Common daily planning enables teachers to use the inquiry approach and to share best practices, which they say is "empowering". These practices are resulting in an in-depth understanding of the evaluation of student work and are contributing to increased passing percentages on Regents examinations. Professional development is carefully targeted to meet the needs of individual staff in addition to supporting whole school goals and targets.

The school has developed strong and effective relationships with parents and the community. However, despite the school's efforts, some parents are reluctant to engage in the life of the school, and administrators and staff continue to work hard to extend and enhance communications to promote greater involvement.

What the school does well

- The passion and commitment of the principal promotes a shared vision so that the goals and steps needed for improvement are known and positively embraced by the school community.
 - The principal is cognizant of the necessity to align her performance goals with those of the school to ensure success in student achievement and personal growth. Outcomes from a variety of data sources identify short and long-term goals and underpin the Comprehensive Educational Plan. Because of identified writing deficiencies, the whole staff focuses on literacy across the curriculum, to good effect on student performance.
 - The school has uniform purpose, direction and measurable goals reflected in the Comprehensive Education Plan and the SLC's action plans. Attendance monitoring, scholarship review and 'High Schools That Work' support school-wide initiatives and planning. As a result, the proportion of students graduating with Regents diplomas, CTE Regents diplomas and CTE local diplomas are significantly increasing.
- An excellent range of formal and informal data provides administrators and staff with information on student achievement, facilitating a clear understanding of student progress and performance.
 - Administrators and teachers regularly collect periodic and summative data so they have a clear understanding of student progress by grade, subject, class and SLC. Students needing academic interventions are identified by teams and individual teachers who use this information to inform their instructional practice to address any deficiencies.
 - As a result of extensive data analysis, thirty off track students in the lowest third receive high quality academic, emotional and social interventions. Guidance counselors assigned to each group develop and review goals and follow-up on a weekly basis with each student. As a result the graduation rate has increased by 20% between 2008 and 2009.
- Creative programming and organizational decisions are consistent with the school's instructional goals and vision and effectively support academic and personal growth.
 - Leaders allocate budget, staffing and resources so an administrator, teacher coordinator, and other staff can support each SLC, constantly monitoring student goals and marking period reports. Data analysis indicated the need for academic support for students entering grade 9 so the school created a new academy for exploration and discovery. Credit accumulation for this cohort has improved substantially because of this addition.
 - Faculty members are assigned in SLC blocks so that students have common teachers in all content area classes. Teachers in each academy collaborate daily and share student work, strengthening the school's goal of building writing capacity as well as promoting accountable talk.

Teachers are positive about the impact, and students appreciate the close and supportive relationships they have with their teachers and peers.

- The SLCs provide a supportive, respectful, and personalized environment benefitting both staff and students.
 - Advance academy, which includes a large percentage of special education students, focuses on grade 9 repeaters aged 15 to 18. Credit recovery is a key component of this SLC that emphasizes engaging instructional strategies, mentoring, weekly advisements, and parental contact creating a positive learning environment. This has resulted in a steady gain of students earning 10 or more credits in grades 10 and 11.
 - The school invests heavily in collaborations and partnerships who provide technical and workplace opportunities. Each student has a partner based on their major who provides support, mentoring and training. The Industrial Management and Training Institute, CISCO and the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) provide additional training to all CTE teachers and also tracks student progress on practice examinations, which is increasing passing percentages on national certification examinations.
- Professional development is effectively targeted, well planned and differentiated to meet the needs of individuals, and is successful in improving teaching practice.
 - “High Schools That Work” augments the school’s professional development providing instructional planning, workshops, seminars, coaching, and conferences. The school also provides structures so that teachers have ongoing support in planning engaging instruction, cooperative learning and literacy strategies. Teachers who attend conferences are responsible to turnkey information. This promotes professional growth and development and consequently staff, and in particular new teachers, feel well supported.
 - Focused walk throughs and observations using the engagement observation tool provide immediate feedback on classroom practice. They provide a common lens so that administrators can evaluate teaching practice and identify next steps for individual staff.
- Teachers have daily common planning time when staff can collaborate on teams, using the inquiry approach, resulting in shared leadership and in-depth analysis of student work.
 - Scheduled planning time for each SLC using the inquiry approach allows daily collaboration so that teachers are more proficient and confident in data analysis. Instructionally Targeted Assessments (ITA) and English language arts pre- and post test identify students needing academic intervention. All teachers are part of a team that assesses sub-skill mastery each marking period to determine student progress and they review student work weekly. Staff maintains records so the relationship between instructional strategies and learning outcomes is determined. The frequency of these meetings is resulting in teacher empowerment and improving student learning. Rotating teacher leaders are responsible for agenda items and discussions, resulting in distribution of

accountability and responsibility among all staff members and an opportunity for all teachers to provide leadership.

- Continuous monitoring and evaluation of students' progress towards end of year goals ensures that the school can make interim adjustments that have a positive impact on student outcomes.
 - Based on January data, teachers and teacher teams reassessed goals and established a cohort of students who need extra academic assistance. They established a new inquiry team to provide academic, emotional and social support. The team's long and short-term goals for each student are regularly monitored and revised based on student progress, and are regularly shared with students and their parents.
 - Formal assessments, as well as information gathered from scholarship reports, provide the school with useful information on science sequence offerings so Physics, an essential component in the CTE curriculum is a third instead of fourth year offering. Preliminary data based on practice examinations show improvement but an analysis in June will determine its effectiveness in raising student performance.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend differentiated instruction, based on data, in all classrooms to ensure consistency in all subjects so that lesson planning sufficiently addresses the learning needs of all students.
 - Differentiated instruction based on student ability is evident in all CTE classes; however this practice is not yet fully embedded throughout the school. As a result, some students, particularly the high achievers, do not consistently receive instruction to address their specific individual learning needs.
- Continue to increase parental involvement and engagement in all aspects of school life so that all families can contribute to student progress and next learning steps.
 - Parents and administrators are working together to develop strategies to increase the participation of the Hispanic population, which is over 70% of the school. Reluctance to fill out forms and complete surveys because of immigration status and language barriers are challenges for the school's continued work to increase parental participation.
- Promote greater school-wide consistency by continuous evaluation of teaching practice, organizational resources and curriculum decisions.
 - The SLC effectively track data and suggest new strategies based on interim assessments. However this evaluation does not include organizational and curriculum decisions in all content areas, therefore there is not currently total alignment. For example, not all subject areas consistently use rubrics and benchmarks to enable students to know precisely how to improve.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Queens Vocational and Technical High School	△	▶	✓	+
Overall QR Score				X
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	△	▶	✓	+
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	
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.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	▶	✓	+
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

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.							
<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				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X			
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.							
<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			
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X			
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.							
<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			
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed