

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Queens Valley School

Elementary-Middle School Q164

**138-01 77th Avenue
Queens
NY 11367**

Principal: Anne Alfonso

Dates of review: November 3-4, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Ronald Feinstein

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Queens Valley School is an elementary-middle school with 632 students from pre-K through grade 8. The school population comprises 10% Black, 29% Hispanic, 34% White, and 26% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 94.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Students are enthusiastically engaged in lessons designed from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best.
 - The entire school community embraces their responsibility to all learners and uses institutional expertise to articulate the school's beliefs that each student must realize their goals and reach personal best in conjunction with the support of the home-school connection. Teams of teachers, coaches, staff developers and intervention specialists look at students one by one to ensure curriculum alignment across classrooms.
 - Consistent routines and teaching strategies are clearly evident in all content areas and elicit high levels of student engagement. The English language arts and art lessons make excellent use of visualization and retelling strategies. Abundant evidence across classrooms of accountable talk contributes to focused conversation.
- A culture that values relationships and mutual trust fosters positive attitudes towards learning that support students' academic and personal growth.
 - Peer mediation referral actively contributes to the safe environment supporting student and adult learning. A trusted guidance counselor and SAPIS worker use role-playing to help students develop deeper understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication, reducing conflicts.
 - The student council organizes spirit and service assemblies including Respect for All. Grade representatives chosen by peers convene monthly Town Hall meetings ensuring that student voices are heard. The student council response to the Haiti earthquake raised a considerable amount of money. Data from a student mentoring reading program suggests that mentors make as much progress as mentees.
- The school uses a wide range of assessment data to identify strengths and areas of need that create a clear portrait of the school for planning purposes.
 - The school synthesizes an abundance of data including: State summative assessments, teacher-made assessments, item-skills analysis, conference notes from guided reading groups, writing from student reflections, administrators' observations of teacher, OORS reports, scores on writing rubrics and other classroom data. Summative data propelled the school to examine strategies for teaching personal narratives and persuasive and informational writing. These adjustments led to further examination and strengthening of rubrics across content areas.
 - The school is strategic, successful and relentless in supporting English language learners and students with high needs in both mathematics and literacy. The school uses all available data to track the progress of these students as well as other high and low achievers and makes

timely adjustments as needed; this results in exemplary and consistent proficiency gains.

- School leaders and faculty develop new and customize existing tools to facilitate the organization and analysis of student performance.
 - A writing assessment, developed by the literacy coach in collaboration with teachers, principal and cabinet, is effectively used school-wide to identify strengths and weaknesses in writing across content areas. This document follows students into their next grade, providing teachers with actionable evidence of a learning trajectory for each student.
 - A writing progress analysis based upon rubrics aligned with Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for each grade has been developed by teachers and the coach and tracks and organizes instruction for sub-groups. The next planned iteration will capture students' writing progress in narrative, persuasive and informational text types.
- School leaders and faculty have a community well-focused on student goal setting to accelerate student learning.
 - Through a partnership with a university consultant, the principal and the school-based literacy coach designed teacher professional development based on a thorough analysis of students' summative writing samples. As a result, changes in literacy instruction have yielded improved student outcomes evidenced by interim benchmarks.
 - School leaders, alongside faculty, develop goals based on current standards and linked to CCSS by student, class and grade. Reading and writing goals, including next steps, are communicated to students and families in a school progress report four times a year. Parents and teachers are enthusiastic and parents say the report "...lets me know what's going on in the classroom" and "gives me ways to help at home."
- The school has established highly effective systems for monitoring teacher growth, with a clear focus on improving instructional practice
 - Throughout content areas, all teachers use student outcomes to support student growth. Small group instruction is embraced by all teachers which results in high achievement and exemplary proficiency gains for students, especially those with IEPs, ELLs and lowest third city-wide.
 - A continuum of professional development opportunities, based on a needs assessment, tracks the content of professional development for each teacher. This document, rooted in the Santa Cruz continuum, supports the next learning steps for teachers. Consultants, coaches, peer partners and varied opportunities for strong modeling, observation and lab site visits are venues that provide timely feedback to improve practice at every level.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to align the curricula to key State standards in order to provide diverse and engaging opportunities, including visual and performing arts, to engage students in learning.

- The school works smartly to align curriculum to state standards in all content areas. More focused attention to alignment across subject areas is an area of need to accelerate the level of engagement currently evident within the inquiry-based classrooms.
- An enhanced understanding of academic rigor paired with critical thinking skills is less consistent in the curriculum and tasks of the upper grades.
- Develop a more strategic plan to ensure all teachers receive support in raising the level of cognitive demand in the academic tasks they design in order to further develop students' critical thinking skills.
 - In order to sustain the high level of achievement, the leadership recognizes a need to develop a deeper collective understanding of how to determine and increase the level of cognitive demand of the tasks students are currently asked to complete in the classroom.
 - Consider further using programming as a tool to create additional opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing more thoughtful and provocative opportunities for students to evaluate, defend, synthesize, analyze and validate their learning at the higher end of Bloom's taxonomy.
- Consider further the impact of adult learning needs in professional development, especially in terms of Common Core State Standards.
 - The school has embraced the work demanded by the new CCSS. A close look at content and pedagogical demands explicit in CCSS uncovered the reality that teachers will need specific content professional development to be prepared for effective implementation especially in mathematics.
 - While the principal and her cabinet have identified a core team who facilitate in-house team meetings for inquiry as well as meetings dedicated to the study of CCSS, there is not yet a broad base of teacher leaders who are considering the impact of adult learning needs demanded by CCSS and defining the appropriate content-pedagogical support and professional development.
- Align assessments, including periodic assessments, to key State standards and provide feedback on student learning to adjust curricula and instruction.
 - The science department has created a series of interim assessments organized by topic and composed of items from previous state items. They are beginning to use item and trend maps with data harvested from quizzes, but these actions have not yet resulted in significant adjustments to curriculum maps, teaching strategies or contributed to increased assessment literacy for staff.
 - Formative and summative item-skills analyses in mathematics and English language arts are used by teams of teachers and individual teachers; however these tools are not yet mined for actionable data and used as effective levers for instructional change.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Queens Valley School	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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	

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	

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.

To what extent does the school...

	UD	D	P	WD
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	

Quality Review Scoring Key

UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed
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