

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Queens Satellite High School for Opportunity

Q338

**162-02 Hillside Avenue
Jamaica
NY 11432**

Principal: Mark Melkonian

Dates of review: January 8-9, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Juan Mendez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Queens Satellite High School for Opportunity is a high school with 257 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 38% Black, 19% Hispanic, 28% White, 9% American Indian or Alaskan Native and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 66%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders organize resources and time in order to support instructional goals and increase student outcomes. (1.3)
 - The administration implements a College & Career Mentoring Program to heighten student engagement through partnerships with the private sector and neighboring community that supports the school's instructional goal to increase literacy skills and graduation rates. Weekly mentoring sessions provide ample time for students to reflect on progress and learning targets. This leverages student interest through active learning and real world experiences such as career and college mentoring. School leaders utilize the Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) to effectively balance student's work experiences with academic goal-setting. Over the past year, this school wide focus on student achievement has led to a 2% increase in the six-year graduation rate.
 - The school provides time weekly for teams to meet with a focus on designing rigorous tasks aligned to the goal of improving student writing. Team meetings have prompted an increase in rigorous written tasks across all subjects. For example, mathematics tasks require students to write a rationale for the problem solving strategy selected to solve word problems. In English and social studies, tasks require students to reference specific evidence and scholarly research to support their arguments. Evidentiary information from the Learning Environment Survey (LES) validates this effort, especially in the category of Academic Expectations, where 73% of students indicate that they completed three or more essays or research projects using multiple sources of information, a 13% increase over the previous year.
- All constituents have embraced the opportunity to develop the social-emotional facets of the school community so that increased trust and collaboration permeates both teacher and student work. (1.4)
 - The school prioritizes the importance of creating a safe and supportive learning environment so that its school community can thrive. The principal shared that, "guidance counselors and social workers teach students to de-escalate (potentially violent) situations." Teachers, school safety officers, and administrators greet students outside of the school, in hallways and upon entering classrooms, thus creating a respectful and secure organizational climate, where all students are acknowledged and valued. The LES confirms this manner of positively embracing culture with 85% of students agreeing that they are safe in their classes.
 - Student support structures are at the forefront of school operations. The school dedicates several hours a week to attendance team meetings, co- led by the principal, social workers and teachers. Additionally, students benefit from ongoing communication with teacher advocates, who consult with students each morning on their progress. All students spoke candidly of the school's caring ethos and the unified effort to keep students college-bound. One student commented that, "the school cares. Teachers offer me opportunities to finish my work and to complete up to

17 credits in an academic year. Staff asks me questions when I am absent.” As a result, extensive emotional support contributes to the academic achievement of all students.

- Teachers benefit from an observation process that is grounded in the Danielson’s framework and allows for the implementation of effective instructional techniques to promote professional growth. (4.1)
 - School leaders adamantly support the divergent needs of teachers in this school. The principal and assistant principal regularly observe classes and provide teachers with timely and actionable feedback that spells out the importance of moderating the pacing of lessons, increased student engagement and establishing adequate closure. Data from snapshot observations, as well as formal observations detail these emergent patterns and show the specific recommendations disclosed by the administration. In addition to feedback data on improving pacing and closure, the observation reports also incorporate data from student assessments and work products. During individual meetings with teachers, school leaders’ reference formative and summative assessment results to further align their feedback with the rubric. As a result, teachers share a common understanding of effective instruction in order to elevate their practice.
 - The use of formative assessment strategies is a main part of the focus at this school and stems from Danielson’s framework, competency 3d. School leaders provide teachers with feedback aligned to this school wide focus, in order to guide professional growth and increase student performance. Observation feedback clearly articulates specific suggestions for teachers to support movement to their next step. For example, several teachers spoke of feedback that suggested the use of the exit ticket as a key assessment strategy at the close of a lesson. The utterance of one teacher illustrates the overall effect of emphasizing expectations: “I intend to use the exit ticket, which gauges student thinking processes, and helps me plan for the next day.”

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the alignment of curricula across grades and subject areas to key Common Core Learning Standards and refine units in order to increase rigor in tasks to advance postsecondary readiness for all learners. (1.1)
 - The school continues to align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards, yet this process is inconsistently documented. Although one of the school’s goals points to the desire to, “have teachers utilize Understanding by Design as a school-wide approach to develop curriculum and instruction,” the practice of designing curricular units and aligning them to selected key standards is only beginning to emerge. Additionally, the progress made in developing curriculum is not being communicated to the principal in a timely manner. While online courses, made available through Novanet and Castle Learning, are used at the school to increase curricular cohesion through blended learning, there is a disconnect between these online approaches and key standards

emphasized in the classroom. The school's curriculum maps revealed differentiated approaches to drive instruction, yet higher order questions and student work that are consistently rigorous infrequently surfaced in most classrooms visited. This approach results in misalignment of curriculum across grades and subject areas that do not consistently translates into college and career readiness skills as evidenced in student work products.

- Increase teacher capacity in designing varied learning experiences and differentiated to meet diverse student needs that promote cognitive engagement for all students. (1.2)
 - The school is using rubrics to establish criteria for classroom writing tasks to differentiate student assignments, yet a fair number of classes observed utilized “Read Alouds” and distributed pedestrian handouts, where Webb’s Depth of Knowledge matrix for leveling, aligned to students’ instructional levels, was insufficient. In such classes, students would read several pages from a text engage in a brief discussion and complete a hand-out that often contained predictable responses such as, “What is the title of the introductory essay?” Although fixed routines were evident, the reliance on low-level questions did not support students in building more advanced cognitive structures or taking ownership of their learning. Thus, academic rigor in many of these teacher-dominated lessons was not frequently observed. As a result, student work products typically entailed fill-in-the blanks activities or handouts asking students to quickly review vocabulary from the text. Consequently, the use of improperly developed scaffolds compromised the cognitive rigor of lessons as evidenced in observed activities and lessened student discussions and participation to improve achievement for all learners.
- Calibrate a system of focused, data-based goals that are closely monitored by school leaders and faculty in order to improve teacher practice to promote school improvement. (3.1)
 - Although the school has established multiple goals pertaining to its College and Career Mentoring / Advocacy Program, the school has made inconsistent adjustments of these goals based on student progress. Overall, a portion of these generic goals state: “Improve graduation rate, improve ELA scores, and improve instructional practice.” Additionally, the school’s CEP goals appear to stem directly from Citywide Instructional Expectations and are not adequately tailored to accommodate the individual needs of the school’s population of transfer students. For example, a 31% passing percentage on the June 2012 Comprehensive English language arts Regents examination fell 11% short of meeting or exceeding its average passing rate from the same examination in 2010-2011, which was 42%. The disinclination to re-shape goals as a result of the lack of close monitoring of student academic progress has led to a marginal impact on external accountability systems.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Queens Satellite High School for Opportunity	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score		X					
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?		X					
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?		X					
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?		X					
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?	X						
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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					
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?		X					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed