

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Queens High School of Teaching,  
Liberal Arts and the Sciences**

**High School Q566**

**74-20 Commonwealth Boulevard  
Bellerose  
NY 11426**

**Principal: Jae Hyun Cho**

**Dates of review: April 22-23, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Juan Mendez**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Queens High School of Teaching, Liberal Arts and the Sciences is a high school that consists of 1192 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 47% Black, 18% Hispanic, 10% White, and 25% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 17% 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 92.4%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is well developed.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school effectively aligns curricula to key standards across subject areas to the CCLS, with rigorous tasks to close the achievement gap. (1.1)
  - Teachers design Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned units of study and performance tasks for core content areas to establish clear learning objectives that integrate the citywide instructional expectations (CIE) into the curricula. Data garnered from Design Your Own (DYO) performance tasks/assessments are used to inform professional practice and result in regular adjustments made to curriculum. These adjustments include aligning units of study to Writing Standard 1, which explores the discipline of argumentation. Additionally, teams have incorporated rigorous fact-finding questions and graphic organizers into curricula to seamlessly blend citywide expectations on argumentation across content areas. A summer “Curriculum Week” further supports the staff in developing vital curricular initiatives with special attention to differentiation and the CCLS. This curricular work has led to an eleven point increase in the percentage of students who receive Regents endorsed diplomas.
  - Select standards in which to focus, stem CIE and enable the teaching of critical skills through the ongoing use of open-ended questions. The majority of teachers engage students in activities that require citing evidence from texts to develop ideas. Indications of academic tasks across grades and subject areas reveal clear learning experiences for both English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs). For instance, group projects and scientific experiments fostered collaboration and Common Core speaking and listening skills. Additionally, an innovative social studies online Facebook project showcases the need to uncover key ideas and details to support vivid descriptions of historical figures using the power of digital literacy. These activities encompassed all levels of Dr. Norman Webb’s Depth of Knowledge chart and reveal heightened sophistication of student work products. Overall, an increase in the number of students passing core subjects, from 82.86% to 88.28%, indicates that students are being both challenged and supported.
- The principal’s strategic leadership promotes organizational decisions that clearly support external partnerships and targeted scheduling in accordance with school goals to improve academic achievement. (1.3)
  - A grant from The Tortora Sillcox Family Foundation funds curricular work that provides supplemental expertise and assistance in assessment initiatives to align curricula with Common Core standards. This program also supports the school’s technology initiatives and the transitioning to computer-based testing. This is evident in new assessments that replicate not only the sample assessments found in Appendix B of the Common Core standards but also the sample question types that surface on the PARCC assessments. The effect of this partnership is a deepening of school curriculum and an increase in the quality of student work products aligned to college and career readiness. For example, research

assignments have increased significantly. The school's partnerships with The Institute for Student Achievement (ISA), AUSSIE, and the Center for Professional Excellence for Teachers (CPET) assist the school in making appropriate decisions that lead to further enhancement of school wide instructional plans. For example, CPET has served to strengthen teacher's understanding of quality instruction and has supported staff with trainings and mentoring on such matters as questioning techniques to aid teachers in continually honing their craft. This has led to a 13% increase in the number of students who earn ten or more credits in their first year.

- The principal has scheduled additional time for departmental teacher teams who meet 2-3 times per week with coaches and administrators to analyze student work via critical friends' groups, grade learning teams and faculty meetings. Team meetings are meticulously documented and the overarching focus is to discern trends in both quantitative and qualitative student data. Teacher teams review student work and make informed decisions on how to improve instructional practice. For example, the use of nonlinguistic representations has been a common decision to improve instruction. This is evident in revised lesson plans and units. Special Education and General Education teachers in Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes are provided with common planning time and focus relentlessly on student progress. The use of time to support instructional goals has resulted in two revised units of instruction in each of the core academic areas to support student achievement.
- The principal and staff work as a unified team to create a calm, respectful, environment, where all students are known by adults and structures promote learning to increase student achievement and personal growth (1.4)
  - The school benefits from a pervasive ethos that promotes a positive learning environment. To ensure that students are known by adults, the principal spearheads creative initiatives that promote personalized support. One recent endeavor titled, "Can you see me?" was led by advisory and supported inclusion and respect. This undertaking involved student and teacher discussions of both class and personal issues in an environment where transparency and resolution are of utmost importance. "Respect for All" week highlights Conflict Resolution, Anti-Bullying and Peer Mediation programs to help ensure that student needs and concerns are well addressed. The principal states that advisory serves as a necessary step that heightens tolerance "regardless of ability and disability." The Learning Environment Survey affirms that adults strongly agree that proper guidance and trust is maintained and: "There is an adult at the school whom my child trusts and can go to for help with a school problem." Thus, school leaders have created a safe harbor for students where adults communicate critical next steps to ensure students' personal and academic success. This positive learning environment has led to a 14.8% decrease in the amount of Principal and Superintendent Suspensions documented in the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS).
- Teachers design assessments and use common evaluations to monitor student growth and provide feedback to improve learning outcomes. (2.2)

- Newly crafted Common Core performance tasks enable teachers to analyze student progress and provide actionable feedback toward mastery of their goals. These performance tasks, deemed “power tools,” are generated by teachers during the school’s work with the Center for Professional Excellence of Teachers. For instance, an inquiry based learning station activity served as a formative assessment to gauge student understanding while adhering to varying learning styles. The school uses a variety of assessments aligned to targeted standards, with a focus primarily on ELA and math. In order to provide timely feedback to students on a more sustained basis, DYO assessments target key standards to support student mastery of targeted skills, such as writing from sources. DYO math assessment rubrics highlight the importance of literacy and state: “Describe and explain the data and prepare a detailed, conclusive statement that ties directly to your research question.” Rubrics aligned to CCLS are used to grade all formative and summative assessments throughout the building. Furthermore, teachers were observed efficiently using exit slips to encapsulate student understanding. Consequently, teachers are able to readily modify student learning objectives so they are clearly aligned with established benchmarks and provide standards base feedback to their students.
- Item analysis of assessment data allows teacher teams to discern emergent patterns and adjust instruction accordingly. Across grades and departments teacher teams use common data that pinpoint trends in all assessments used at the school. For example, the ability of students to conduct text-based writing was limited. Minutes from team meetings highlight action plans that serve as critical next steps based on current findings, in order to support all students, including English language learners and student with disabilities. Ongoing data inquiry informs adjustments to curricular and instruction and allows the school to abstain from tracking students and instead implement immediate supports. Student-teacher conferences take place regularly to expand upon previous feedback to support students in meeting their goals. Thus, the analysis of common assessments has impacted students’ learning by providing the instructional scaffolds to address shortcomings that emerge from student data.
- The observation process is grounded in the Danielson framework and allows for the implementation of effective instructional techniques and professional development to improve best practices. (4.1)
  - The school has constructed an observation matrix tool, whereby instructional feedback is conveyed through a customized instructional framework to highlight teachers’ strengths and next steps. This tool paints a vivid picture of both emerging and developing practices in the classroom. It captures the essence of classroom practice and hones in on several elements related to Danielson competencies 1e, 3b, and 3d. Teachers receive actionable feedback that supports teacher development by identifying next steps. For example, recent observations highlight the importance of providing more student centered learning. This helps teachers to meet their professional goals which are to enliven classroom discussion techniques in accordance with the CIE. In response to observation feedback around student data, one teacher opined on her students’ scores from a new unit on argumentation: “I knew my scores would be low. It (the data snapshot) reflects a re-norming of the rubric

and a rethinking about my own introduction of a text.” This shows that classroom feedback allows teachers to be more reflective on key competencies aligned to the Danielson Framework.

- Assistant principals attend professional development on instructional competencies in the Danielson Framework, offered by the Children First Network (CFN) and turn-key this information to their respective staff. Teachers also engage in interdisciplinary inter-visitations or “walkthroughs,” accompanied by the principal, as demonstrated in ample letters of appreciation. Moreover, the school has partnered with a former Adelphi University student teacher supervisor to provide mentoring to strengthen teacher expertise around the targeted Danielson competencies and provide tailored support for eleven untenured teachers. Observation feedback portfolios that contain rich information to sustain teacher growth are analyzed to decipher professional development needs. A “Teacher at a Glance” document captures the teacher’s school year goals and evaluates instructional practice which is also used to inform professional development options for the staff. Data from the “Teacher at a Glance” form shows that numerous teachers have made improvements as observation reports document an increasing penchant to elicit higher order thinking skills through effective questioning techniques.

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

- Refine teaching practices to ensure that teachers strategically provide multiple entry points to ensure engagement in challenging tasks and rigorous work products that narrow the achievement gap among all students. (1.2)
  - The school administration has crafted a document entitled *Foundational Best Practices*, to clarify underlying pedagogical beliefs around how students learn best. The document spotlights classroom learning that is student centered, motivational, and celebratory. However, motivational pathways to success are not consistent across classrooms. For example, in one classroom students were highly motivated with anticipatory sets that asked them to explain subject-specific concepts and vocabulary relative to their own experience, while in another students were immediately immersed in the solving of a mathematical equation. In the latter, students were not encouraged to make necessary connections to real world experiences. A few teachers shared their classroom concerns: “Students struggle with remembering previously learned skills.” Additional teacher comments centered on teaching “basic skills to cover the curriculum.” Consequently, this gives way to varied belief systems where motivational practices are imbalanced and not fully aligned to the school’s belief on how students learn best.
  - The school has received notoriety from the mass media regarding fully inclusive special education and inclusion models. These models coincide with the belief in the inquiry approach, emphasizing rigorous learning through questioning, use of multiple sources and exploration of diverse perspectives. However, the use of multiple representations to engage all students is inconsistent across classes. For example, while the majority of lessons involved cooperative learning and stations activities, some classrooms limited the cognitive engagement of all students, specifically

students with disabilities, by not providing challenging writing tasks aligned to their instructional levels, in order to elevate the quality of student work. As a result, annual assessment data shows a widening gap among general education students and students with disabilities on the vast majority of Regents examinations.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

Queens High School for Teaching, Liberal Arts and Sciences	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?				<b>X</b>			
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?				<b>X</b>			
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an <b>inquiry approach</b> that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>