

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Queens Metropolitan

High School 686

**91-30 Metropolitan Avenue
Forest Hills
NY 11375**

Principal: Gregory Dutton

**Dates of review: May 7 – 8, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Catherine M. Powis**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Queens Metropolitan High School is a secondary school with students from grade 9 through grade 11. The school population comprises 5% Black, 39% Hispanic, 40% White, and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- High expectations communicated to teachers, students, and families are supported by structures that build buy-in and accountability. (3.4)
 - The principal and assistant principals are consistent in communicating high expectations clearly delineated in school-wide goals focused on improving teacher practice, creating a ‘common culture’, and increasing student achievement. Teachers are held accountable for improving their practice by understanding and reflecting on their shared research-based teaching framework. In turn, school leaders are clear in their expectations for growth in their summaries of observations and subsequent professional development. Leaving nothing to chance while intent on laying out a path of clear expectations, the new, collaboratively created QMHS Common Culture Guide charts ‘expectations’, ‘what they look like’, ‘why do we do it’, and ‘how will we know’ for several categories such as classroom expectations, class-to-class transitions, school-wide expectations, and expectations for teachers. For example, under the category of “Grade Books: How should grade books be kept?” teachers are expected to enter a minimum of three grades per week into the web-based program, student work must be entered no longer than a week after it was turned in, and all grades must be aligned to the school’s grading policy. The rationale is that all students need multiple grades and frequent and consistent feedback on their progress in order to know how they are doing in real time, and therefore, teacher grade books are expected to be accurate and up to date. These collaborations among school leaders and faculty create a unified set of expectations that teachers hold themselves accountable for and, in turn, support each other and their student’s learning trajectory.
 - Parents are quick to compliment the new direction the school has taken this year. As one parent shared, “The school needed boundaries and now we have them.” This includes a unified mission that states that 100% of Queens Metropolitan High School (QMHS) students will attend and graduate from the college of their choice. Through a transparent, web-based program, parents are kept informed of their children’s progress toward credit accumulation, Regent passing, interim assessment progress, attendance, homework, and other scholarship information on a daily and weekly basis. Parents enjoy two-way communication via email, phone calls, and face-to-face conferences. The parent coordinator is given high marks by parents as being extremely supportive and informative regarding school policies and student progress. Additionally, parents appreciate the new College 101 course offered to juniors to educate them on options for colleges, arranges trips to different colleges, the application process, and periodic transcript reviews to monitor college readiness indicators. Additionally, parents indicate that the principal, teachers, and assistant principals, “push” students to do their best, one example being that this year Advanced Placement courses are offered in English and U.S. History in response to parents’ consistent requests for accelerated coursework offerings. As a result of these efforts, parents are true partners in their children’s learning and progress toward and aspiring for college and career.

- The new principal strategically redirected resources and effected organizational decisions that support instructional goals and action plans in a collaborative atmosphere, consistently improving instruction, and student outcomes. (1.3)
 - The new principal conducted a comprehensive needs assessment that commenced during the summer in order to determine how best to support the school's revised instructional goals. Teachers are provided per session time to create detailed, vertically aligned Common Core skills sequences that match corresponding Common Core units of study as the design for instruction across subject areas. Through a school-based option, teachers have several opportunities built into the weekly program allowing them to meet to continue curriculum development and to analyze resulting student work that demonstrates progress toward mastery. In turn, department and grade teams hold themselves accountable for their student's daily progress and mastery of content and skills as evident in interim assessments administered throughout the year. Moreover, teacher-student ratio was reduced from 17:1 to 15:1 thus creating smaller class size so that targeted interventions can be more precisely delivered to individual and groups of students. After reviewing the second quarter Algebra data, it was noticed that ninth grade students were not performing well. This led to creating four more sections in Algebra to reduce class size even further and schedule a double period everyday for students who were struggling. Additionally, the teacher with the most success in helping students succeed on the Algebra Regents was reassigned to this class for the second semester. Eleventh grade students, some with individual education plans (IEPs) and who have not yet passed the Algebra Regents are pulled out of their math classes for two to three days of targeted, small-group instruction every week. Also, due to a change in science program offerings, many students are on target to go this year from zero to a four-credit accumulation for science coursework. In order for Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) teachers to become experts in a content area and to be able to plan effectively with their co-teachers, this year they each teach no more than two subjects, very often one. With this in mind, all students with an IEP are in ICT science classes so that they can complete State lab requirements and move toward a Regents' diploma. Advanced newcomers are programmed for an additional unit of English as a Second Language (ESL) to accelerate their language acquisition, thus providing strategic programming to support their learning needs. Additionally, ESL teachers provide additional language and instructional support by providing push-in ESL services in general education Global history classes. These strategic organizational decisions support both goal-setting and long-range planning as the school takes on a twelfth grade next year and graduates its first cohort. Impact of this year's work is evidenced by students' positive gains in progress and significant increases in credit accumulation for the first semester this year when compared to last year, especially for ELLs and students with IEPs.

- Effective school-wide assessment practices aligned to the curriculum ensure the analysis of student progress, leads to adjustments in teaching and learning, and increased student progress. (2.2)
 - The principal steadfastly monitors student progress by tracking several data streams, that include credit accumulation for both grade promotion and meeting a four-year student graduation goal of 85% or above, content-specific, teacher-created interim assessments aligned to a quarterly grading system, Regents' passing rates, and progress toward more students meeting requirements for

Advanced Regents diplomas. Likewise, teachers and teams are diligent in tracking results from interim assessments for their content area so that students and teachers are informed of what content and skill deficits need to be targeted for mastery. Moreover, teams use data that assesses grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing, to adjust units of study and daily lesson planning. Grade teams complete Student Progress Trackers three weeks prior to the end of each quarter that suggests necessary interventions for individual students, which is followed by a meeting with the principal to devise a Data Analysis Action Plan to put into motion. This comprehensive and collaborative approach not only creates valid and reliable assessments, but also results in tracking student progress throughout the year and making necessary adjustments to curriculum and instruction. Consequently, all students demonstrate progress toward mastery in the core subjects by increased passing rates this year.

- A web-based grading system tracks each subjects daily and weekly progress that students and parents monitor. This data reflects the school's newly revised grading policy based on the mission of the QMHS Grading Policy Committee to provide grades that present meaningful feedback to students, while allowing teachers to understand students' progress toward mastery of the prioritized standards in each content area. Additionally, when interviewing students with their student work at hand they were quick to share the rubrics that informed them of what they know and how well they know it. Rubrics with actionable teacher feedback accompany draft work and/or final products, and include rubric scores. One eleventh grade student shared weekly essays in U.S. History with targeted feedback using a Regents rubric in order to effectively support preparation for the Regents. Another tenth grade student shared that due to the deficits that surfaced on her tests and other assessments she is programmed to attend an additional eighth period Global History class for additional practice.
- School leaders collaborate in a feedback loop with teachers that encompasses classroom observation data and analysis of learning outcomes that strategically promote professional growth and teacher reflection. (4.1)
 - School leaders who visit classrooms as a daily routine use a QMHS rubric that is a hybrid of Danielson's framework and Kim Marshall's rubric and serves as a formative tool for all mini-observations allowing for a focus on addressing four competencies. Both verbal and written feedback to teachers is consistent, actionable, and precise at highlighting "successes, things to think about, evidence that the objective was mastered, actionable changes in planning, classroom management, delivery of instruction, and data and assessment." Furthermore, feedback is aligned to individual professional goals that are determined through a collaborative, self-reflective process between teacher and school leader at the beginning of the school year as each teacher completes a self-assessment and ranks him- or her-self in each category of the rubric. In turn, both administrator and teacher brainstorm strategies for improvement in selected areas for growth and finalize an individual plan for improvement that becomes part of each observation. For example, one social studies teacher's improvement plan included using the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) chart to develop higher-level questions within a lesson and insert questions to check for understanding during mini-lessons. Furthermore, teachers benefit from additional support by engaging in peer visitations with the assistant principals and use specific protocols that enable peer feedback. Based on observation and student data, a midyear round of meetings between administrators and each teacher assesses progress toward goals and subsequent improvement

plan revisions. These strategic and collaborative efforts to provide meaningful feedback to teachers have contributed to coherence of practice and instructional growth across classrooms.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop instructional coherence across grades and subject areas to be reflected in Common Core aligned curricula that emphasize instructional shifts to close the student achievement gap and promote college readiness. (1.1)
 - One of the school's goals this year is to provide students with challenging curriculum that requires critical thinking and analysis at a college level. To this end, Common Core aligned curriculum maps are developed in every course. Units of study are captured in Google.docs and include open-ended, essential questions that drive content, skills, and assessments. Reading, writing, listening, and speaking are prioritized, and across grades 9 through 12 there is vertical alignment of Common Core skill sequences in the four core subjects captured in a map. Likewise, unit tasks reflect rigorous Common Core expectations. For instance, in the English Language Arts (ELA) unit, using the text, *The Bluest Eye*, students engage in writing a six paragraph argumentative essay based on the prompt: Who is at fault for Pecola's victimization? In another class, students are asked to analyze multiple non-fiction sources of primary and secondary documents to defend a claim. In social studies, students are expected to complete a research paper to promote a college-going mindset. However, the identified higher order skill sequences are not yet embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects and therefore, not all students, particularly students with individual education plans, are able to demonstrate higher levels of thinking across all subjects.
- Further develop teacher capacity across all subjects and grades to ensure that all learners have access to rigorous curricula and academic tasks, especially lower performers that result in academic progress. (1.2)
 - Faculty and school leaders believe that students learn when they write frequently, reading appropriately challenging tasks, and engage in classroom discussions that require them to use textual or math evidence to defend their claim. Teaching practices aligned to these beliefs are evident in classrooms as teachers are working diligently to elevate students' critical thinking through higher levels of discussion and participation. For example, in a tenth grade English class students participated in a Socratic seminar by asking text-based questions, making text-based comments, and completing an outer circle reflection worksheet. In response to an open-ended question, "Who defines the ideals of beauty?" and within the context of a discussion, students listened closely to the comments of others, articulated their own thoughts and responded to the thoughts of others. Students used accountable talk stems to state their opinions and claims and led the discussion by calling on their peers for the next contribution. In a Geometry class, a constructivist approach challenged students to find ways to determine the surface area of a prism and cylinder. Students participated in group work while some students thoughtfully shared their rationale for how they addressed this challenge. However, not all students across all classrooms have opportunities to extend their discussions by inviting comments from classmates or have choice in how they complete tasks and therefore, not all students take ownership of their learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Queens Metropolitan	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