



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Queens Gateway to Health Sciences Secondary School

Q680

**160-20 Goethals Avenue
Jamaica
NY 11432**

Principal: Judy A. Henry

Dates of review: November 13-14, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Juan Mendez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Queens Gateway to Health Sciences Secondary School is a middle school/high school that consists of 810 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 42% Black, 14% Hispanic, 4% White, and 38% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 39% of the students enrolled and girls account for 61%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 95.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Expectations for delivering a rigorous curriculum are well supported by curricular units that are regularly refined through an arduous revision process that ensures college and career readiness. (1.1)
 - The school builds and refines a coherently aligned curriculum that is thoroughly organized with rich units of study and rigorous performance tasks to maintain a Common Core (CC) aligned content area focus throughout the school. Common themes across content areas are represented in units of study that cross middle and high school. These reflect adherence to key instructional shifts. For instance, teachers in humanities classes emphasize a balance of both literary and informational texts by finding regular opportunities to immerse students in the analysis of primary and secondary documents that connects research to present day. Additionally, the school rotates instructional shifts in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics on a bi-weekly basis to cover the spectrum of the new standards. This has resulted in a weighted Regents pass rate in high school English and mathematics that is among the top 6th percentile citywide promoting college and career readiness (CCR).
 - Teachers plan lessons using student work and data to ensure that all students have access to the curricula. Bi-weekly teacher collaborations using student work drive the ongoing development of CC aligned literacy units across grade levels and disciplines. Evidence of skills-based lessons showcase a prominence of argumentative writing skills that call upon students to provide evidence, claims, and counterclaims. Middle school teachers are guided by adaptations of CC performance indicators and place added focus on academic language. This targeted approach to tiered language intervention supports the needs of special populations and provides students with frequent opportunities to grapple with critical language contained in key standards, resulting in the lowest third middle school population of this school, the highest performing in District 28 when considering the percent of students in the 75th growth percentile or higher.
- The administration strategically advances organizational decisions that support a wide range of goals aligned to improved student outcomes and student progress. (1.3)
 - Partnerships abound and serve to drive the decision-making process. CCR pathways are ever-present in the high level participation in the CUNY College Now program and the Bridge to Medicine program at York College. Additionally, the school strategically develops goals aligned to the notion of student preparedness for pre-med programs that many enroll in, upon graduation. Furthermore, science goals are incorporated into the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP), as its first goal indicates: "By August 31, 2013, we will increase the number of students passing the Science Regents Examination by 3-5%." Moreover, in order to help teachers realize these goals, a Teaching and Learning Center provides resources and space that serves to create an ideal planning

environment. Additional resources such as Wizard Test Maker by Eduware are used to maximize student outcomes and the emphasis on technology and 21st century skills surfaces in student work products. These work products include research papers that require deep reading of scientific journals as well as the use of current events such as “major budget” to make real world connections in math. As a result, students are participating in authentic learning experiences and producing work that will prepare them for college and careers.

- The principal makes strategic organizational decisions to support student progress, including the creation of a longer school day to accommodate underperforming students and provide academic support. This decision was prompted by feedback from ongoing teacher collaborations, whereby teachers informed the principal’s cabinet that present school structures could be modified to promote greater access to the curriculum. One beneficial structure is the reliance on double-period classes, which allows teachers to extend instructional time, especially in support of English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs). Many of these block courses culminate in state Regents examinations. Moreover, teachers are assigned courses based on their areas of expertise to maximize the potentiality for student progress. This use of effective teacher placement has led to a 92% passing rate on Regents examinations in both Comprehensive English and Geometry.
- School leaders effectively use a variety of assessments aligned to curricula, which results in a clear understanding of the performance of students in order to guide instructional decisions and inform planning. (2.2)
 - The predetermined measures of student learning serve as one of many common assessments that drive ongoing planning that leads to greater levels of student mastery. Teachers share common rubrics that parallel those used on the New York City English Language Arts Performance Assessment. These rubrics allow for the communication of quality criteria and expectations. Furthermore, these rubrics familiarize students with the language of argumentation. This approach, coupled with the use of College Board assessments from ReadStep as well as uniform midterm exams, allow teachers to effectively track student progress. Teachers commented that, “A safety net is created for students that comes from regular communication between all teachers—especially integrated co-teaching (ICT) teachers.” This has enabled all students to succeed at high levels as evidenced by the school’s 96.9% graduation rate.
 - Teachers have fully integrated assessment protocols into daily instruction, as evident across classrooms, as one teacher notes, “We use exit slips to assess students.” For instance, a social studies teacher gauged student learning with a closing activity that asked students to respond to any one of three open-ended questions related to the learning objective. The teacher used the ‘ACE’ acronym to help steer student thinking so that students would answer, cite, and explain thoroughly. Additionally, the school’s use of checks for understanding leads to instructional adjustments and meaningful feedback to students. This also allows students to engage in the self-assessment process whereby students determine their progress in relation to academic goals. One Regents teacher states, “I review Regents results, conduct an item analysis and group results by topic; then I map the areas for improvement and share

that with students.” Regents classes targeted constructive response segments of previous Regents examinations, and as a result 97% of all high school students at the school earn Regents diplomas.

- School leaders effectively monitor and support pedagogy with a focus on deepening adult learning in order to elevate instructional practices throughout the school. (4.1)
 - School leaders support teachers with an abundance of tools that allow teachers to expand their repertoires, including the creation of its own teacher professional library, where reputable texts illustrating best practices are readily available. In addition, observation reports highlight the tendency of administrators to reference skills expounded upon in these texts. This effective feedback allows next steps to be clearly delineated. Furthermore, teachers freely reference the language of the Danielson Framework for Teaching relevant to specific components they strive to improve, such as questioning and discussion techniques. As a result, 77% of teachers affirm that school leaders’ place a high priority on the quality of teaching as indicated in the Learning Environment Survey.
 - School leaders harvest and astutely analyze data from teacher observations and develop plans to increase dialogue to advance teacher effectiveness. Furthermore, school leaders customize professional development aligned to creating coherence between observations and professional teacher goals, with teacher-led professional development being remarkably successful and widely received. Additionally, teacher intervisitations promulgate even greater levels of transparency and trust among the staff. Teachers spoke of organizing for additional peer intervisitations while meeting in groups. Teachers also shared artifacts from teacher trainings which included modified lesson plan formats. Systematic arrangements for collaboration between students’ current and previous year teachers have resulted in immediate identification of teaching methodologies that are better equipped for a diverse student population.
- The principal has established effective systems for school self-evaluation and modification of practice with clear focus on improving student learning resulting in school wide coherence. (5.1)
 - The principal institutes various processes to analyze the school culture and environment, including regular meetings with student government where student needs can be heard. When seniors expressed the need to focus on the college application essay, the school shared this information among all constituents and developed a plan to support high quality narrative and persuasive writing aligned to the CC. Within 18 months following student graduation, 92.9% of students enroll in either a two or four year college.
 - Teachers systematically evaluate teacher team effectiveness by engaging in organized reflections that serve to qualitatively measure their progress. For example, monthly team meetings utilize self-assessments to determine the answers to such questions as: “How effectively are we integrating the instructional shifts in our classrooms?” Additionally, this means of self-evaluation is memorialized so that school leadership can

provide the necessary interventions. This occurs seamlessly as teacher team facilitators debrief with the administrative cabinet on a monthly basis to shed light on organizational and instructional gaps related to the ongoing implementation of Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Moreover, interventions also support improved instruction in rigorous Advanced Placement classes where students have notoriously underperformed. This has resulted in the institution of College Board summer professional development as well as online accelerated learning tools such as Renaissance Learning to further best practice instruction.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine teaching practices to ensure teachers strategically provide multiple entry points so that lessons challenge all students and demand student ownership of work products. (1.2)
 - Driven by the Danielson Framework for Teaching, educators are attuned to the importance of questioning and discussion techniques. This was evident in one class that immersed students in the Socratic Seminar approach, where high level cognition was present in student questions. However, students were inconsistently able to generate their own higher order thinking questions across the vast majority of classrooms. For instance, the reliance on the Cornell note-taking technique in one class constrained students to a singular means by which to create meaning about content. While some teachers experiment with classroom instruction that differentiates by activity type, the utilization of multiple entry points across all classrooms is limited. In addition, the principal articulates that classroom beliefs center on “activities either by choice or are designed based on purposeful grouping,” however, these practices did not wholeheartedly manifest in the preponderance of classrooms, thus limiting student access and ownership of their learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School: Queens Gateway to Health Sciences Secondary School					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 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?								X
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the 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 supports 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 those expectations?								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 student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?								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	