



Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Queens Preparatory Academy

Q248

**143-10 Springfield Boulevard
Queens
NY 11413**

Principal: Tashon Haywood

**Date of review: January 15, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Renee Peart - Zachary**

The School Context

Queens Preparatory Academy is a high school with 488 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 81% Black, 9% Hispanic, 1% White, 5% Asia, 1% American Indian and 3% other students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 85.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	Developing
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	Focus	Developing
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Celebration	Proficient
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders regularly communicate high instructional expectations to the faculty and families are well informed about their children's academic progress.

Impact

The leadership's accountability system for high expectations is resulting in a cohesive staff that fully understands school-wide expectations. Furthermore, parents understand expectations that connect to a route of college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers provide parents with curricula information and college resources at parent grade-level orientation events. Additionally, the school hosted a curricula night where teachers provided families with information about performance tasks, Common Core Learning Standards, Regents exams, and college preparation.
- Parents reported that the school staff provides parents with detailed information about their children's progress. The Echo online system, progress reports, phone calls from teachers, and parent/teacher conferences keep parents informed about their children's academic accomplishments and struggles. The school's college office staff helps parents understand the college application process. One parent said, "This school has a family-oriented environment. Everyone knows each other. My child is getting lots of information about college".
- School leaders created the Queens Preparatory Academy Eight Core Values System that includes traits such as inquiry, perseverance, scholarship, advocacy, compassion, integrity, leadership, and community. These core values represent characteristics align to school leaders high expectations that are communicated through venues such as professional development, informal and formal observation conferences, data-chat sessions, and data-chat follow up sessions about scholarship data. Moreover, school leaders use the data-chat sessions to hold staff accountable for their expectations. At these sessions, teachers must present school leaders with detailed information about student progress.
- The school's staff handbook has detailed sections about teaching and learning, project-based learning, assessments, planning tools to support instruction, and teacher team protocols. These documents along with written feedback from teacher observations reinforce clear school-wide instructional expectations.
- The school has a partnership with College Confident that provides students and their parents with opportunities to complete college applications, get training on writing resumes, and prepare for college interviews. Parents reported that the schools' partnership allows parents to have ongoing support with helping their children complete college applications and financial aid packets.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

The school has a school-wide grading policy; teachers use rubrics and create efficacy assessments, and provide limited feedback to diverse learners in content areas. Across classrooms, teachers' strategies inconsistently implement the use of ongoing checks for understanding and opportunities for students to self-assess their work.

Impact

As a result, teachers are not consistently using formative assessment data to provide timely, actionable feedback to all learners, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities so that learners are fully aware of their next learning steps across subject areas to achieve increased student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the preponderance of classrooms visited, teachers displayed the grading-policy and student work with rubric-based comments on hallway and classroom bulletin boards. However, a review of student portfolios across content areas revealed that not all students consistently receive actionable feedback that informs their next learning steps. Some student work products have no feedback and other work products had detailed feedback. Some students' assessments had just a score and other assessments had a score with teacher feedback.
- In a ninth grade algebra class, the teacher asked students to analyze the relationships of quadratic functions, identify math concepts, complete a graphical representation, and discuss real-life scenarios. The teacher circulated the classroom, asked higher-order questions to assess students working in small groups, and conducted a midpoint check through questions aligned to the standards. The teacher referred back to the learning outcome and selected students to respond to their peers' real world scenarios. Then the teacher adjusted the lesson based on the findings gathered through the midpoint check. This type of checks for understanding practice was not consistently observed across classrooms visited.
- School leaders reported that teachers check for understanding through teacher questions, exit slips, midpoint checks, and teachers' use of verbal feedback. When asked if teachers take conference notes to capture students' strengths and common misunderstandings, school leaders responded that teachers take conference notes but it is a work in progress and an area of focus for the school. Teachers taking conferences notes and adjusting the lesson based on data collected is not yet an embedded practice across the school. It was inconsistently implemented across classrooms visited.
- Students reported that they use rubrics to self-assess their writing and peers give them feedback. Some student work displayed on classroom bulletin boards had student self-assessment comments. However, when learners were asked to provide evidence of student work with rubrics in subject areas other than English, they were unable to produce work products with rubrics and teacher rubric-based feedback. Furthermore, although students were observed having discussions, evidence of students using rubrics to assess their writing and peer editing to construct authentic meaning of work products were not consistently observed across classrooms visited.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school has curricula aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and incorporates the instructional shifts. Curricula and performance tasks consistently accentuate rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

The school's curricular choices bolster college and career readiness and stimulate opportunities for diverse learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, to improve their critical-thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- Using the New Tech Network Project Planning Toolkit, teachers created unit plans that include content standards, the instructional shifts, information sources, enduring understanding, authenticity and adult connection, driving questions, performance products, writing products, targeted content, literacy skills, learning outcomes, project plan, assessments, and a culminating task.
- Academic tasks promote higher-order thinking skills. For example, in the eleventh grade English course, students are asked to write a three-four page argument paper about how inequality amongst class impact social mobility, in a tenth grade Humanities course, students are asked to write an analytical essay on one of the characters in "The Lord of the Flies" through a chosen philosophical lens, and in an eleventh grade History and Government course, students are asked to participate in a mock debate of the Federal Convention of 1787. Posing as the founding fathers, students are preparing persuasive speeches on what their delegate spoke on at the convention.
- School leaders reported that teachers use Karis Hess' Cognitive Rigor Matrix and Norm Webb's Depth of Knowledge to assess the rigor of academic tasks. A review of academic tasks, student work products, and unit plans provided evidence of rigorous performance tasks. For example, in a twelfth grade Advance Placement Language and Composition course, students were asked to support a claim by writing and delivering a five-minute speech that argues whether or not Margaret Garner, an African American slave, should be classified as an unsung hero.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Teaching practices are becoming aligned to a coherent set of beliefs aligned to Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Moreover, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

As a result, pedagogical practices do not consistently support the differentiated needs of all students including ELLs, students with disabilities, and higher achievers, and diverse learners' are not fully reaching their academic potential.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders reported that the school's shared beliefs about how students learn best are based on intellectual student engagement, performance tasks that promote higher-order thinking, student discussions, and learners citing evidence and argumentation. However, across classrooms visited the components of this belief were not consistently observed. For example, in one of the algebra two and trigonometry classes, the students independently solved rational expressions. The teacher asked Norm Webb's level one and two questions to assess students' understanding of the problems. Students were not provided with opportunities to explain, model, and discuss their mathematical process with their peers and the lesson was teacher-directed. Furthermore, the teacher's lesson plan included students conducting a turn and talk to discuss rational expressions. However, the plan was not fully executed.
- In a twelfth-grade Integrated Co-Teaching English class, learners were divided into six heterogeneous groups and given differentiated tasks to sort statements into qualities essential to writing a summary in argument and qualities that are unnecessary to writing a summary in argument. The teachers conferenced with groups of students and provided differentiated-targeted supports. This practice of providing students with multiple entry points into the curricula was uneven across classroom visited.
- In aligning with the school's beliefs on how students learn best, evidence of student discussions was observed in some classrooms. Students engaged in independent, partner work, small group discussions, and whole group instruction. However, there were missed opportunities to engage all students in intellectual higher-level engagement where learners support a claim by citing text-based evidence. For example, in one of the eleventh grade history classes, using a Socratic Seminar approach, small groups of students discussed their views about Andrew Jackson actions during his presidency. However, they were not guided to use their higher-order thinking skills or asked to provide text-based evidence to support their claims in the discussions. Additionally, one student dominated the discussion and the teacher had not adjusted the lesson to provide opportunities for other students to engage in the discussions that promoted higher-order thinking.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers engage in inquiry-based partnerships that advance shared teacher leadership and strengthen the refinement of pedagogical practices.

Impact

The professional collaborations afford teachers opportunities to bolster their instructional practices and teacher leaders have input into school-wide instructional practices.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders provide weekly occasions for teachers to meet by department and grade. Teachers meet every Monday in vertical department or grade-level meetings. Teachers use Data Chat and Tuning Protocols to set norms for team meetings where they examine assessment results and performance tasks. Teachers are required to have agendas, sign-in sheets, and minutes that are organized by the team leaders and reviewed by the assistant principals
- School leaders reported that teachers use an Efficacy Self-Directed Improvement System (SDIS) that is a standards-based assessment system where teachers accumulate and use student assessment data to guide their instruction. Teacher teams engage in inquiry-based work where they discuss targeted students and develop strategies to implement into lessons to support learners' struggles. For example, during an eleventh grade inquiry team meeting observed, teachers discussed targeted students and detected students needed further support with adding details in their writing across subject areas. Teachers discussed how they would alter forthcoming lessons to model in what way, so students can include more details.
- Every grade team has a teacher leader that meets with the assistant principals monthly to deliberate about student work, data analysis, and goal setting. Teacher leaders and teachers reported that they have input into school-wide decisions that affect student learning. For example, one teacher reported that he discussed with school leaders about creating a book club during the Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) period that is now embedded across the school.