



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Queens Satellite High School for Opportunity

Transfer High School Q338

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

Principal: Mark Melkonian

**Date of review: January 08, 2015
Lead Reviewer: LaShawn Robinson**

The School Context

Queens Satellite High School for Opportunity is a transfer school with 224 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 49% Black, 30% Hispanic, 10% White, 6% Amer. Indian or Alaskan Native, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 3% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 66.1%.

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 | Developing |
| 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 | Focus | 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 | Additional Findings | Proficient |
| 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 | Additional Findings | 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 | Celebration | Proficient |

Area of Celebration

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

Teacher teams analyze student work, diagnostic and interim assessment data and develop appropriate goals to meet the needs of students. Distributed leadership structures are in place so teachers have a voice in key decisions.

Impact

Current team structures in the school promote shared leadership and are aiding in improving student learning and teacher practice.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders ensure that teachers engage in ongoing professional collaborations in the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards that are aligned to the school's goals. For example, during the team meeting observed, English and special education teachers carefully reviewed student achievement data and discussed next steps. Analysis of assessment data determined that students needed additional scaffolds to support skills such as summarization and increased opportunities for evidence-based writing across all content areas. As a result, the teachers developed a note card strategy to support students with summarizing and designed a checklist rubric to guide students in assessing their work. Teachers reported that the new structures have resulted in increased student achievement.
- During team meetings, teachers share best practices, analyze benchmark data, review student work, and revise curricula. Teachers develop appropriate strategies to support learners and adjust curricula. During the teacher team meeting visited, teachers shared they have learned how to 'take diagnostic data and turn it into action steps' to improve student learning using this structure as a medium. For example, the agenda for the teacher team meeting was to "determine next steps on instruction for English language arts (ELA) Regents prep students." Teachers discussed data from the *Writing Strategy Tracking Sheet* and determined that they will group students based on the data results to develop targeted strategies for the identified groups. In response to the data, some teachers have increased the number of revisions required for each assignment while another teacher noted that her students must read their written drafts aloud to support them in self-editing and assessing. As a result of these aforementioned practices, there has been an increase in proficiency on interim assessments and students' Performance Based Assessment Tasks (PBATs) completion rates have improved.
- School leaders empower teachers to make decisions that impact student learning across the school. For instance, during the team meeting, teachers indicated that they went to the administration and asked if they could begin a Saturday school program to support students with improving their literacy skills in preparation for the English language arts Regents exam. This request was based on data reviews from teacher team work. The administration agreed to allocate funds willingly to support this initiative which has resulted in gains in student progress.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Teaching practices aligned to a set of beliefs reflective of the Danielson Framework for Teaching towards high-level thinking and discussion are applied inconsistently across classrooms.

Impact

Missed opportunities to participate actively in rigorous learning tasks aligned to instructional shifts and rich discussion, limits the ability for students to demonstrate high levels of thinking and engagement.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader indicated that there is an emphasis on high-level questioning and student discussion across classrooms as part of the school's instructional focus and set of beliefs. While some students were engaged in high-level discussions and rigorous tasks, these practices were inconsistent across classrooms. For instance, during the United States history class, students were engaged in discussion using questions such as, "Did we sacrifice Japanese lives in exchange for Americans in using the atomic bomb?" During this lesson, students had to provide President Truman with advice on the use of the atomic bomb after analyzing two viewpoints that shared the pros and cons associated with this topic. Students used a graphic organizer to categorize the two points and formulated their advice by utilizing supporting evidence from the articles. However, these practices were not evident across all classrooms visited.
- Across other classrooms visited, teachers asked questions such as, "Would you eat those fish?", "What is a dead zone?", and "Who else in the story is a friend?" In one English class, students were provided a series of questions to discuss how to perform a proper interview. However, the teacher did not ask many open-ended questions and students did not have an opportunity to build upon each other's ideas. In addition, the teacher did not provide sufficient wait time for students to be intellectually engaged.
- In geometry, students were using flags from different countries to determine patterns and come up with geometric equations. Modifications of the task included alternate flags for students who struggled, English language learners (Ells) and students with disabilities. However, in other classrooms visited such as in an English classroom, students were required to interpret a quote. Some students attempted to interpret the quotation while other students did not engage in the activity. The teacher canvassed the classroom to provide one-on-one support for learners. When the teacher asked students to share out by restating the quote in their own words, students did not respond. In a science classroom visited, the teachers asked students to identify the parts of the microscope and review the steps of how to use it. Although, a large majority of students was able to respond to these questions and complete the task, the teacher continued this line of questioning.

Additional Findings

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| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: | Developing |
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Findings

School leaders and teachers are in the process of ensuring that all curricula, including maps, units, tasks, and lesson plans are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, consortium expectations and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula reflect planning to provide students access to tasks.

Impact

Instructional coherence is in the beginning stages of development in the school's curricula. Planning to engage a diversity of learners is evident yet, inconsistent in implementation, which limits the opportunity for all students to demonstrate postsecondary readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers reported that they are working to align instructional activities and lesson plans with the Common Core Learning Standards to build coherence around critical thinking across subject areas. A review of units and academic tasks in some grades and subject areas reveal planning for instructional shifts such as text based answers using questioning and deep discussions. For example, questions embedded in the poetry analysis unit include, "How do literary techniques affect the meaning of a poem?" However, the Earth Science lesson objectives gear toward how to use and label the parts of a microscope, which reflect low level, fact-finding Depth of Knowledge (DoK) prompts.
- Teachers articulated that the English team is working to improve vertical alignment of the curricula so that required skills and expectations for students can become evident across all grade-level courses. Teachers also explained that they have incorporated more writing across the curriculum, particularly in mathematics, and are incorporating scientific writing across the sciences. In addition, they shared that they are in the process of developing lessons that require students to create their own questions. An English unit provided demonstrates activities and prompts to engage students in developing their own questions.
- Teachers described that they are making modifications to lessons and tasks based on students' performance based assessment tasks, Regents, and student work products. School leaders provided some examples of modified lessons based on feedback provided by administration to teachers. In addition, the lead teacher is supporting new teachers with curriculum development and alignment to Common Core Learning Standards. The school is working toward integrated literacy across classrooms, particularly to foster opportunities to support students with reading comprehension. Annotation and summarization strategies are beginning to emerge across some classroom lesson plans.

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| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

Teacher created assessments and rubrics provide ongoing opportunities for teachers to deliver feedback to students and adjust instruction across content areas.

Impact

The use of assessments leads to actionable next steps so that students know what they need to do to improve toward the school's instructional expectations. Adjustments to instruction lead to increased progress towards meeting students' needs across grades and subject areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Using interim assessments aligned to culminating performance based assessment tasks, school leaders and faculty determined that students were struggling with reading comprehension. The assessment review fostered adjustments to integrate graphic organizers across all content areas to support students in this area of deficit. In addition, the English department has been working to align their instructional practices so that students are better prepared to meet the Regents benchmark. As a result, the principal reports that the school is on track for continued growth in Regents performance for the January 2015 administration period due to increases in proficiency on interim assessments. The assessment review fostered adjustments to integrate graphic organizers across all content areas to support students in this area.
- During an interview, students explained that they receive rubrics for all major assignments and performance based assessment tasks. Students stated they are expected to use the rubric as guidance documents to make sure that they are appropriately completing the task. Furthermore, the students also described that there are opportunities for peer review and feedback. In addition, students described that they use feedback received from the performance based assessment task benchmarks to improve their work. For example, students shared that they review the comments on rubrics from teachers and/or other students. They update their PBATs and resubmit for review. Students stated this practice helps them to improve performance on their PBATs.
- Performance based assessment tasks are broken into smaller chunks per term where students receive feedback and make modifications to their work in order to meet instructional expectations. These frequent feedback loops have informed curriculum planning leading to the development of two column charts as a note taking tool, the use of graphic organizers to assist with reading comprehension and protocols to provide actionable feedback to students.

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| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

High expectations are communicated to the staff through frequent observations, ongoing professional collaborations, and professional development opportunities. Structures and systems are in place to communicate high expectations to students through ongoing, detailed feedback and support.

Impact

Systems of accountability hold staff responsible for ensuring expectations towards school goals is met. Staff collaborations and feedback lead to increased academic progress and prepare students for the next level toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has developed extensive opportunities for teacher collaboration and provides support on their expectations through teacher leaders and administration. Moreover, the principal and assistant principal utilize the observation process, walk-throughs, and frequent snapshots to provide teachers with feedback and communicate expectations for teaching and learning. The principal articulates that he provides written feedback to teachers conveying expectations from lesson formation to knowing their students well enough. The feedback provides teachers with specific action steps to adjust instructional practices. For example, administrators determined that teachers required additional support in analyzing student data and provided professional learning opportunities. As a result of feedback from administration and the expectation to know your students well, teachers developed a *Writing Strategy Tracking Sheet* to identify student progress towards mastery of skills and implemented learning strategies to support students in meeting their goals.
- The school community has developed multiple partnerships with colleges and local businesses to expose them to possible college and career paths. Partnerships include St. John's University, Queens Borough Community College, Borough of Manhattan Community College, and the Ritz Carton. The Ritz Carlton provides an annual Career Day and job shadowing experience for students at the school.
- Teachers articulate that performance based assessments prepare students for college as the required components allow students to conduct research and analyze information. During common planning time, teachers discuss data trends that emerge from completed performance tasks and use this information to identify skill areas for development so student can meet college readiness standards. Students indicated that the performance based assessment tasks help them to learn presentation and research skills. One student stated, "You have to do lots of research and writing at our school and when you get to college, that's what you are going to have to do!"