



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**The Queens College School for Math,
Science and Technology**

Elementary-Middle School Q499

**148-20 Reeves Avenue
Queens
NY 11367**

Principal: Helene Jacob

**Dates of review: March 16, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Michael Dantona**

The School Context

The Queens College School for Math, Science and Technology is an elementary/middle school with 506 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 29% Black, 13% Hispanic, 8% White, and 47% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 96.9%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</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	Focus	Proficient
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.	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to the entire staff. School leaders and staff effectively communicate the expectations for college and career readiness to all families.

Impact

Ongoing training and communication of high expectations has resulted in a culture of mutual accountability among staff. Effective communication to parents has resulted in a successful partnership in support of student progress toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff provide effective communication in a variety of formats. School leaders and parents explain that they receive communication from the school via email, newsletters, parent workshops, progress reports, monthly calendars, coffee with the principal and a unit-by-unit curriculum for each subject area. A parent shared that the principal, “enriches students and parents”. Another parent added that the “workshop to compare the writing from K-8 was very good.” In addition, parents shared that the school really pushes and motivates their children.
- Parents explain that they worked collaboratively with school administrators to develop an after school enrichment program, resulting in the creation of a debate team, Lego robotics, a choir and a chess club.
- School leaders communicate high expectations to staff through goal setting meetings, professional learning opportunities, faculty conferences, department meetings and individual conferences. Teachers explain that the building leadership “is very thorough”. In addition, school leaders have developed opportunities for inter-visitation. An inter-visitation protocol was developed along with a schedule highlighting the areas of strength within staff and those who could benefit from visiting those classrooms. A teacher explained that the inter-visitations present opportunities “to make sure that we are all learners.”

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, however high levels of student thinking and participation were not evident across the vast majority of classrooms.

Impact

While students were challenged through tasks that required reflection and evidence, in some classrooms teaching strategies did not fully engage all learners in appropriately challenging tasks, limiting opportunities for higher order thinking and student discourse.

Supporting Evidence

- While teachers provided multiple entry points into the curriculum, such as varied text and questions aligned with specific student needs, not all teachers are using these strategies effectively during instruction. For example in one classroom, all students were expected to complete a task on summarizing, which the teacher cited that the class had completed numerous times before and that only some had difficulty with, limiting the opportunity for all students to engage in a rigorous academic task that met their individual needs.
- Across classrooms, in alignment with the school's instructional focus, students were provided with opportunities to articulate and support their reasoning in writing. For example, in one English language arts lesson, students were required to respond to the following prompt and use details from the text to support their responses: How does the first page of the article prepare the reader for the rest of the text?
- Across classrooms there were opportunities for students to engage in conversation, however deep discussion with their peers regarding content or work products was evident across many but not all classrooms. For example, in a 1st grade class, students used a discussion checklist to talk about character traits. A student shared with his group that his character was naughty because he does not listen and ignores what people say. Conversely, in some classrooms, opportunities for student-to-student discourse were limited, resulting in fewer opportunities for discussions that reflect high levels of student thinking.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher and student work and lead teachers, vertical teams and instructional cabinet structures are embedded to support distributed leadership.

Impact

Teacher team work has resulted in the shared improvements and mastery of goals for groups of students. Team structures have resulted in teachers playing an integral role in key decision making so that there is effective teacher leadership.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams systematically analyze student and teacher work using a protocol with the following steps: select the assessment, describe the expectations for the student work, assess student work, describe student performance, clarify student learning needs, discuss strategies for differentiation and bring closure. During the team meeting teachers expressed that they were focused on using the Thesis-Evidence-Analysis-Link strategy and began reviewing student work samples. The members noticed improvement in student writing and noted that the students needed additional support making a stronger link, resulting in the sharing of modifications to the Thesis-Evidence-Analysis-Link checklist to support teaching and learning. Student writing samples from March revealed that writing pieces are longer and include analysis as compared to September writing pieces, which were shorter and did not include analysis.
- School leaders provide numerous opportunities for staff to attend professional development. Teachers explain that after attending professional development they are expected to turnkey the training to support their colleagues. One teacher shared that “relationships have developed and the staff are great resources.” A teacher shared that her guided reading practice was tweaked as a result of a colleague presenting.
- Teacher leaders aligned the school math program in kindergarten through 8th grade to GO Math! to ensure that math vocabulary was cohesive across the school. This resulted in the development of a Common Core Learning Standards math vocabulary list to be used during instruction to match the rigor of the Common Core.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards and are refined using student work and data. Academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits for all students including English language learners and students with disabilities.

Impact

Decisions around school curricula allow the school to build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students, resulting in the demonstration of higher order thinking skills across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty design curricula to include unit essential questions, content standards, the instructional shifts and Common Core Learning Standards. For example, a science map included the expectation that students would write to inform or explain in a unit of study about solids and liquids. The map also includes multiple entry points such as videos, audio stories and smart-board technology to support all learners. The school has been utilizing the Teachers College Reading and Writing Workshop model for the past six years and has adopted GO Math! for students in kindergarten through the 8th grade to ensure consistency and coherence across grade levels.
- Benchmark assessments are utilized to support adjustments to the curriculum. Student difficulty with vocabulary development resulted in a school-wide decision to incorporate Words Their Way to support all learners. In addition, in order to support student writing, school leaders and staff decided on the implementation of the Thesis-Evidence-Analysis-Link strategy.
- In alignment with the school's instructional focus on writing, tasks are developed to promote higher order thinking skills. For instance, students in grade 6 were expected to respond to a task about how the building of the pyramids led to advances in science and mathematics. Students were expected to develop a thesis statement, cite evidence, explain the evidence and connect the evidence back to the thesis statement. Another example required the students to determine whether or not geography helped or hindered development.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Common assessments are utilized across grades and subject areas. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Teachers utilize data to monitor student progress and to support instructional planning decisions. Formative assessment data is analyzed in order to make effective adjustments to meet the needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms students are provided with opportunities to assess themselves against a standards-based rubric or checklist. Students share that they are given rubrics and checklists to support them in completing tasks. One student explained that he likes the Thesis-Evidence-Analysis-Link checklist because it helps him self-assess to improve his writing.
- School staff implements common assessments to monitor the progress of their students throughout the year. Teachers administer Teachers' College running records to all students 5 times per year. In addition, all students in kindergarten through 8th grade complete a fall and spring math benchmark as well as a mid-year GO Math! assessment. Teacher-developed data collection documents are utilized to support the development of instructional groups and to monitor progress over time. For example, a math teacher developed a progress monitoring system that highlighted specific areas of need for each student in the class with a corresponding action plan.
- Teacher formative assessment practices were applied to adjust practice across classrooms through checklists, conferences and student turn and talk opportunities. For example, as a teacher circulated through the classroom to collect data, she noticed that students were not utilizing the strategies that she modeled during the mini-lesson and made an adjustment to ensure that the students completed the task effectively. In another classroom, as the teacher circulated around the classroom, she recognized that the class needed additional guidance in how to use the discussion protocol and made an adjustment to meet the needs of her students.