



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Queens Vocational and Technical

High School Q600

**37-02 47th Avenue
Queens
NY 11101**

Principal: Melissa Burg

**Date of review: March 30, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Lucius Young**

The School Context

Queens Vocational and Technical is a high school with 1,553 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 6% Black, 75% Hispanic, 7% White, and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 62% of the students enrolled and girls account for 38%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 89.50%.

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	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	Focus	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	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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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 work including assessment data, student work and classroom practice. Distributive leadership structures are embedded.

Impact

Systematic collaborative analysis results in shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students. Teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers serve on teacher teams devoted to inquiry. The small learning communities meet at least three times per week to engage in curricular revisions, make adaptations to curricula and tasks, and reflect on practices that are aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. For example, teachers reviewed the geometry Regents and noted that they needed to collectively adjust their lessons and units to provide additional time on topics and to include additional questions and discussions that provide students with multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning. Teachers felt that these newly designed activities that included the modeling of the theories would engage more students and serve to improve the scores in the geometry Regents.
- Teacher teams create assignments anchored in Hochman strategies to increase writing skills. Currently, the Ninth Grade team has focused on ninth grade writing and as a result of this work has seen an increase in the level, quality, and quantity of the writing. Additionally, teachers have learned to model good writing as common practice and have collectively built in additional formative writing assessments to check in on students on a more regular basis. Teachers also model writing inside classrooms and create strategic exit slips to identify needs and plan strategies to address area of foci.
- Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of instruction and note implications to better meet the needs of all learners. For example, teacher teams design tiered questions to meet the needs of all students and ensure that students have a real world connection that engages them and enables them to apply the learning. Academic and career and technical education teachers across subject areas meet together regularly and leverage information learned to plan lessons connect to a student's area of focus. At these meetings are opportunities to share how the identified groups of students are performing in their respective classes. Teachers identified writing as an area of concern for many students after reviewing student work and as a result both Academic and CTE teachers work collaboratively to integrate strategies to improve writing as evidenced in their daily lesson plans. The CTE electricity teacher attributed collaboration as making him better at tracking groups of students, of having a better knowledge of how students are performing, and being better at planning instruction to align to the needs of all of his students.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas. However, use of ongoing checks for understanding to make effective adjustments is not consistently implemented.

Impact

Feedback derived from assessment analysis provides teachers and students with actionable feedback and informs targeted adjustments in curricula and instruction; however, daily inconsistency in making effective adjustments to instruction is impeding progress for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses a variety of assessments to guide next steps. For example, the math department analyzed the scores from the Regents exam and discovered a trend in that students were able to identify and correctly respond to questions that were largely procedural type in nature but were not as strong in responding to questions requiring demonstration of conceptual knowledge. After this discovery, teachers explored ways to address this concern and are now crafting questions in their lessons that require students' explanations in order to support this area. Teachers now plan lessons to engage students in the application of concepts posing problems that require students to write responses.
- The school uses item analysis as a means to adjust curricula and inform practices. Social studies teachers used these results to identify areas of focus for their incoming ninth grade students. The school focused on the Common Core Learning Standards and the expectations of the Regents in planning next steps to support this cohort of students. The school discovered that comprehension skills were an area that required attention and focused their professional learning on this area to deepen their understanding of this work. They visited another high school to observe comprehension work and have become learning partners with this school to strengthen this area of work and to support study on the school's focus on writing.
- Classroom visits and meetings with teachers and students indicated that the school uses rubrics as a means for students to self-assess and prepare for next steps. Students stated that teachers provide rubrics and strategies on how to improve their work. For example, at the student meeting, one student shared that she learned from the end of assignment rubric that she needed to improve punctuation in her writing. Another student shared that she was able to use information from the rubric to guide her in her next steps while she completed a written essay. However, visits to the classrooms indicated that teachers did not consistently make effective adjustments based on ongoing checks for understanding.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills and are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

A diversity of learners including English language learners (Ells) and special education students has access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- In English Language Arts, teachers use the rigorous Common Core aligned Engage NY and core curriculum materials and in math, teachers use a combination of curricula emphasizing higher order thinking including Association of Mathematics Assistant Principals Supervision (AMAPS) and Engage NY curricula resources. The school has adopted approved New York State Career & Technical Education (CTE) curricula and supplements the curricula with additional resources. Teachers meet on a regular basis to align the curricula from the previous units of study to their current unit of study. In addition, teachers make adaptations for subgroups that include Ells and special education students as well as students who are performing above levels. For example, visual cues, mind maps, and graphic organizers were provided to Ells and special education students.
- Teacher teams reviewed the Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) data from scoring the school wide assessments. From the data analysis, the school determined that Ells struggled in use of claim and counterclaim. The teachers met and discussed how best to support Ells as teacher teams, analyzed student work products, made curricular revisions designing scaffolds such as student checklists and graphic organizers to improve students' accuracy in making claims and responding to counterclaims. The school has adjusted the curricula by including writing in all subject areas. In particular, CTE teachers are focusing on academic and professional vocabulary in writing as part of their course curricula.
- Unit plans denote access points for Ells and special education students. For example, supports for Ells include the use of visual supports, graphic organizers, and vocabulary development in order to improve students' comprehension skills in using multiple texts in citing text evidence and in the development of arguments supporting the school's focus on writing. Additionally, unit maps denote the scaffolding strategy of peer collaboration and revision.
- Lesson plans illustrate multiple designs of student engagement with scaffolds and entry points for all students. For example, students in Global History were provided with a Choice Board to complete an activity. These activities reflected various ways including crafting an essay to writing letters to demonstrate learning. Students in math classes worked independently or in groups to prove theorems and demonstrate with graphs while other groups of students participated in jigsaw strategies responding to various levels of questions and then presented their findings to fellow classmates as a means to understand the full text.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices and strategies are aligned to the curricula and to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and consistently provide multiple entry points.

Impact

All learners including Ells and students with disabilities are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher order thinking skills in student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The school believes in the philosophy that students learn best by doing. In the majority of classes, students have the opportunity to engage in activities that allow them to persist and pursue until they are able to master a task. For example, in plumbing, students were gathered around while a pair of students designed a rigging system to have piping conform to certain specifications. This task is an essential part of the CTE certification process for students. All students were engaged including Ells and special education students in discussions, in applying learned skills, and in executing an evaluation system to determine whether the task was completed successfully.
- Students in flexible groups worked on activities and questions that were tiered in the majority of classes. In an integrated algebra class, students were divided into groups of two to work with on a series of quadratic equations to select an equivalent form of an expression and relate it to key features of a graph showing intercepts, maxima, and minima. Students worked collaboratively, discussed responses, and explained and justified their thinking with their classmates.
- In a global history class, students worked in ability-based pairs receiving two tailored critical thinking questions requiring them to analyze primary and secondary sources to cite textual evidence to justify their responses. After conversations with their partners and the sharing of the evidence, students were able to articulate how the forces of globalization shape the world and began to construct an argumentative essay that included a counter-claim based on questions posed.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for professionalism, instruction, and the Danielson Framework for Teaching to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates high expectations and provides students with detailed feedback and support.

Impact

There is a culture of mutual accountability and guidance/advisement supports that ensure students are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations are conveyed to staff through school meetings that are anchored in the Danielson Framework for Teaching. To improve pedagogical practices, a survey was generated to identify teachers' professional development needs. Survey results were used to make schedule adjustments to accommodate the creation of professional learning communities focusing on areas selected for professional growth. As a series of professional learning is completed, the teachers are provided with another survey to check in on the quality and progress of these mutually accountable learning opportunities and set guidance for the next set of learning opportunities for the staff. As a result, the professional learning Fridays have now become a school wide practice.
- Families receive communication from school in many ways including the newsletters, phone calls, and progress reports that provide information on how their child is achieving. Also the school provides parent workshops to help parents plan how to support their child in their next learning steps. Additionally, parents can access information at home on the school's web based program, Pupil Path, in which teachers input data into the system two times per week regarding student's assessment scores and provide suggested next steps for parents to use in helping their child at home. Parents shared that this information is helpful and has provided them with an opportunity to collaborate with teachers in support of next learning steps.
- Teachers work closely with students to help prepare them for the next level. For example, in an electronics class, students in their junior year shared that the tasks that they were tested on came out of a course module workbook which they worked on both independently and collaboratively in order to advance to the next level of proficiency. Students worked at their own pace as they were challenged each step of the way towards mastery. One student shared that he looked forward to completing this year so that he could move into his senior year and the next level of the course that included fiber optics, as he has planned that this will be his career path.