



**Department of  
Education**

*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Queens Metropolitan**

**High School 28Q686**

**91-30 Metropolitan Ave  
Forest Hills  
NY 11375**

**Principal: Gregory Dutton**

**Date of review: November 25, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Juan Mendez**

## The School Context

Metropolitan High School is a high school with 1039 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 4% Black, 47% Hispanic, 36% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 89.5 %.

## School Quality Criteria

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

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**3.4 High  
Expectations**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

The school maintains a supportive learning environment that engages all constituents in a college and career readiness culture to students and parents through regular courses.

### Impact

School leaders establish key structures to bolster the school's learning environment through ongoing attention to learning outcomes resulting in high levels of college readiness and it is this open communication that positively impacts student achievement as evidenced by a 100% college acceptance rate.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school's yearly publication titled 'Common Culture Guide' details heightened expectations around behaviors and interventions to help structure daily interaction with students. These guidelines include clear expectations that allow for consistency and professionalism across classrooms through school-embedded rituals that hold students accountable for learning.
- To further elevate expectations, two instructional leads created *Knights of the Roundtable: Teachers as Learners at QMHS*. This is an after-school, teacher-run video club for teachers in multiple disciplines and grades, where presenting teachers receive 'warm and cool' feedback using protocols aligned to the Danielson rubric. Teachers study the culture for learning across respective classrooms at the school through the use of video and develop instructional initiatives around core school values.
- Celebrations are the norm as the school holds individual award ceremonies highlighting various facets of the school-level community. Many of these celebrations involve families who participate in monthly celebrations to honor perfect attendance. In the 2014-15 school year, 48.6% of the entire school had perfect attendance for the month of October. An honor roll luncheon and a most improved student luncheon are also celebratory gatherings that communicate expectations to families. The principal commented that, "What we choose to celebrate communicates our values to our students and students have responded positively to this." In 2014-15 the school's first graduating class had a graduation rate of 89.4%.
- School leaders emphasize accountability for student attendance through targeted bi-monthly attendance team meetings. Guidance counselors track students whose attendance rate drops below 90%. Moreover, grade-level teams have attendance goals for subgroups of students, all of which are closely monitored.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

Curricula across grades do not yet strategically and consistently integrate shifts and rigorous tasks that push all students to high levels of achievement.

### Impact

Lack of coherence limits opportunities for students to produce work products that demonstrate high levels of thinking and engagement for all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- While lesson plans accentuate the importance of Common Core alignment and strong emphasis on instructional shifts, tasks that require students to expand and demonstrate their thinking are not yet consistently provided across all subjects to English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. This is seen in academic tasks such as one we observed in an integrated algebra class, which explored “similarities and differences between the altitude and timegraph.” Although the teacher asks students to compare two items, without the specificity of criterion students are unable to fully attain a deeper understanding of the content they are comparing.
- The school has recently added a 12th grade government class and biological research course that culminate in research papers that are presented to panels of teachers and community members. This purposeful decision to build coherence in senior courses serves to promote college readiness through immersion in more complex texts. This was also visible in an 11<sup>th</sup> grade English class, where students were seen engaging in academic tasks that compared *To Kill a Mockingbird* to secondary sources such as articles on the shooting of Trayvon Martin.
- Teachers have curriculum maps rooted in vertical skill sequences and aligned to the Common Core. However, these maps are not tailored to meet the individual needs of all students. Instead, maps and scope and sequence documentation reflect a generic core-aligned continuum that has not been customized with targeted scaffolds for student support, especially for English language learners and students with disabilities.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty share a clear set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by a research-based framework and consistently engages students in high levels of thinking and participation.

### Impact

As a result, the school's coherent pedagogical approach supports students in building sophisticated conceptual understandings leading to growth in student progress and higher levels of student ownership, engagement and awareness. This pedagogical approach serves to build more sophisticated conceptual understandings among students leading students to be more aware of their actual knowledge.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers believe in providing students with opportunities to engage in a 'productive struggle.' Attempts at rigor are promulgated through the use of Dr. Norman Webb's Depth of Knowledge chart, which teachers use to create higher order questions and prompts that ask students to evaluate, analyze and cite evidence for their thinking instead of to only identify or explain.
- Classrooms incorporate techniques such as Socratic Circle, where student-led discussions reveal high levels of participation and cognitive engagement. Additionally, classrooms we visited used strategic grouping to allow teachers more frequent opportunities to provide in-the-moment academic enrichment to underperforming students.
- Math teachers we visited were seen providing students with multiple entry points that include graphic organizers and guided notes. Moreover, students in math classes were asked to defend their mathematical reasoning and explain why they solved a problem in a particular way. This has resulted in greater student familiarity with domain-specific vocabulary.
- Student work products are centered on class debates. Social studies classes reinforced the importance of clarity in one's thesis statement as well as exploring the opposing argument. Teachers note "we are focused on text-based answers where students visit and revisit a text." This requires that students substantiate their claims using the text—whether by referencing mathematical rules or by closely reading a poem and citing a key phrase.

**Findings**

Use of rubrics and common assessments across classrooms and grades provide actionable feedback to teachers and students that inform instructional and curricular adjustments.

**Impact**

As a result, students receive targeted support that leads to high levels of performance across grades and subjects. This assessment approach enabled the school to attain the highest math weighted Regents passing rate in its peer group according to the 2013-14 School Quality Guide.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers develop and submit quarterly assessments to department leaders. Department leaders and assistant principals review these assessments and provide feedback on CCLS alignment as well as access for all learners. Teachers submit two versions of their quarterly assessments, a standard version and a differentiated version, which are structured make learning more accessible to students with special attention to English language learners and students with disabilities.
- Interim assessments establish student reading comprehension and vocabulary levels. All students take the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. This test provides the school with critical baseline data and allows teachers to adjust their lessons to meet the needs of all students. This allows the school to adopt a mastery-based approach as well as use data to heterogeneously group students and scaffold lessons.
- Rubrics are used in the vast majority of classrooms in order to support students to become independent thinkers. A student shared that “We usually receive rubrics before the assignment begins and these rubrics allow us to understand how the assignment is graded.” These rubrics are also used by teachers to provide actionable feedback to students to achieve higher levels of mastery. Teachers mention that due to the consistent and actionable feedback given to students, “Last year, our 9th graders took the Common Core Algebra Exam for the first time and our passing rate was over 90%.”
- School leaders reference re-teaching plans whereby teachers teach the unmastered standards using different methodologies than before. This mastery-based approach leads to reassessing students on standards and providing small group instruction to groups of students who struggled with the same standard.
- Teachers use several different types of checks for understanding including exit slips, mini-white boards, and hand signals to assess whole class understanding. During re-teaching weeks and Regents preparation time, students have standards trackers and are required to monitor their own mastery.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### **Findings**

Teachers benefit from participating in professional collaborations that foster reflection and growth as well as provide options for researching effective instructional techniques and school-wide decisions that focus on improved student achievement.

### **Impact**

As a result, teacher growth is an embedded school priority, leading to improved teacher capacity and improved student learning.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders guide department teams in weekly meetings and grade-level teams meet 1-2 times per month. Much of this work involves refining skill sequences based on student work analysis and addressing gaps between school expectations and student performance.
- Teacher leaders play a prominent role in driving teacher teams while making critical decisions. An analysis of data from interim assessments led teams to incorporate a strategy whereby all students are strategically grouped to enrich levels of support. The school's network offered training in this regard which was turn-keyed by instructional leads during weekly department meetings.
- Instructional capacity is strengthened in teacher teams through ongoing participation in regular peer inter-visitations to observe the curriculum in practice.
- In grade teams, teachers set grade-wide credit accumulation goals and attendance goals using data from STARS. Teachers examine data to monitor student progress against their goals and create next steps to help all students.
- Teacher teams have built capacity through topical and thematic-based supports. This includes work time options on Mondays, where teachers focus on strengthening student higher order thinking skills and refinement of academic tasks. Teacher teams lead professional development sessions titled accordingly, "Designing Student Assessment," "Common Core Alignment," "Danielson 3b, 3c and 3d," "Teacher Video Club," and "Lesson Study." During 'Optional Mondays,' teachers are given the autonomy to choose which professional development session best meet their needs.