



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Queens Transition Center**

**High School Q752**

**142-10 Linden Boulevard**

**Queens**

**NY 11436**

**Principal: Fritzzy Sannon-Brown**

**Date of review: April 28 - 29, 2015**

**Lead Reviewer: Beverly Ffolkes-Bryant, Ed.D.**

## The School Context

Queens Transition Center is a high school with 384 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 55% Black, 28% Hispanic, 7% White, 9% Asian and 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 69% of the students enrolled and girls account for 31%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 71.5%.

## 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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</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>Focus</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

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

The school maintains a supportive learning environment that conveys high expectations through annotated displays of student's work with guiding comments for clear next steps. Workshops and performance updates keep families apprised of student progress towards college and career readiness.

### Impact

Structures that support the school's high expectations build buy-in and accountability amongst staff, students and their families, thus providing a clear path towards increased student achievement and college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- The Queens Transition Center's (QTC) school community continues to articulate a vision of high expectations to all students and staff. Feedback from the 2012-2013 Quality Review resulted in the addition of the following goal to the school's Comprehensive Education Plan: "By June 2015, the QTC community will implement differentiated school-wide activities that will result in a 10% increase of parental engagement as compared to the summative data collected during the 2013-2014 school year, specifically parent attendance sheets and surveys." The impact of the addition of this goal enabled the QTC community to focus activities aligned to The Department of Education's "Shared Path to Success", the multi-phase initiative, focusing on preparing all students to graduate from high school fully prepared for college, careers, and independent living. The school created activities, which deepened the work the school has completed in the areas of transition, communication, and establishing new partnerships. This includes counselors and school staff engaging in systems of on-going reviews of transcripts, Regents requirements and the New York State Career Development and Occupational Studies Standard (CDOSS) credentials.
- The school has a partnership with Work, Achievement, Values & Education, Inc. (WAVE), a non-profit corporation dedicated to helping youth make the successful transition to adulthood. Students utilize the WAVE Job Readiness Curriculum (JRC), designed to provide teachers with resources to teach students how to find, get, keep or change a job, and how to work effectively with others.
- To increase parent engagement, the parent coordinator increased the number of workshops this and last year, specifically tailoring them to meet parents' needs. The school held multiple open houses at the beginning of the school year to accommodate the needs of the parents. The school hosts workshops at multiple sites and repeats the offerings to accommodate parents unable to travel, giving them options on which date they can attend. The increased number of workshops is in response to feedback at the open houses and from the 2012-2013 Quality Review. Parents receive information regarding upcoming events tailored to their specific requests. These efforts have promoted these activities and have addressed concerns. For example, for a workshop on "Guardianship", the parents needed clarification on its definition and the documentation and information to be presented. Interpreters provided translation services. The parent coordinator and transition linkage coordinator email the information to other schools, partners and other parent coordinators in the district to communicate events to other parents and families within the district. In addition, the parent coordinator arranged for workshops to take place at various times throughout the day.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. While pedagogy provides consistent instructional supports, including questioning and discussion techniques, the use of strategic multiple entry points and instruction based on data that reflects purposeful groupings varies across the school.

### Impact

Across classrooms, while curricular extensions support students to produce meaningful work products, there are missed opportunities in some classrooms for all learners to maximize their learning. As a result, higher-order thinking and extensions of the learning experiences are inconsistent for some students.

### Supporting Evidence

- A shared school wide belief links rigor with the use of Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) categories. Teachers are expected to use the DOK wheel to assess the level of tasks and questions. However, in some observed classes, instructional practices that deepened the level of instruction, especially to implement higher-level questioning, varied.
- Although some classrooms provide students with multiple entry points into the curricula, there are inconsistencies on how teachers are using the access points to scaffold instruction for students to ensure that they reach their intended learning targets. For example, in an observed global history class, the focus question was "How did the Catholic church become a dominant and forceful presence in medieval society?" After reviewing the key vocabulary words for the lesson, the teacher directed the students to copy notes from a PowerPoint presentation, using a graphic organizer. Thus, it is unclear if the current strategies are setting a path towards mastery of skill and content for all groups of students.
- While across classrooms students are engaged, in some classrooms assigned tasks do not sufficiently produce higher order work products across grades and subject areas. Similarly, some student notebooks and work folders do not show sufficient evidence of tiered supports to ensure consistent progress for struggling learners. Consequently, those teachers do not know what students have learned, or how well and if immediate intervention and clarification can benefit the progress of those students.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

The school's curriculum is coherently aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and consistently emphasizes higher-order skills for all learners across grades and content areas.

### Impact

The school's curricular decisions build coherence that promotes college and career readiness for all learners. Across grade and content areas, academic tasks push student thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- Academic tasks emphasize higher order thinking skills and require students to explain fully their thought process. For example, in a science class, the topic was "The Water Rocketry Project" and students had to follow precisely a complex multi-step procedure when creating and building their rockets from soda bottles, taking measurements, performing technical tasks and analyzing the specific results based on explanations in the text. This activity correlated with the Common Core Learning Standards. The project also utilized the New York State Career Development and Occupational Studies Standard (CDOSS) two – integrated learning, where the students had to demonstrate how to apply academic knowledge and skills in the workplace and other settings. Displayed projects required students across grades and departments to explain concepts and reflect on the tasks. These practices result in consistent engagement of students.
- Teacher teams meet the varied needs of students by using curriculum based on the student population. General education students use the standardized curriculum for high school students which follows the state mandated requirements for a high school diploma. The school also uses the District 75 pacing calendar and the Attainment curriculum in all subject areas for the alternate assessed students. The Attainment curriculum includes reading, writing, math, safety, social skills, self-determination, communication, and work/life skills for children and adults with special needs. Using interactive software, Attainment combines instructive lessons with games designed to engage and challenge learners with special needs. In addition, students working out in the community use the WAVE curriculum, since it focuses on work and job skills. Lesson plans reflect the targeted scaffolding of instructional methodologies to support the cognitive abilities of diverse learners using materials and strategies such as visual aids, desktop charts, visual cues/prompts, explicit task cards, intentional grouping of students and scaffolding of academic language. This enables those students to participate in multiple entry point instruction, which reinforces the concepts being taught.
- All staff members received training in DOK and were asked to consider two questions when planning lessons: "Are lessons meant for gathering information?" and "Are they stimulating thought?" Staff members also spent a lot of time defining "rigor" by watching videos of classroom observations and implementing higher-order tasks themselves. It is the principal's expectation for teachers to scaffold information in classrooms and focus their instructional planning in order to support student mastery.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### **Findings**

Administrators and teachers across the vast majority of classrooms effectively use or create a wide range of assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula to monitor school-level needs and student progress. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment to plan instruction and make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs.

### **Impact**

The school's assessment practices provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement so that all students' learning needs are met and they can demonstrate increased mastery.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The administrative team uses their bi-weekly meeting to analyze key data for the school. The analysis includes students' Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals through their biweekly progress monitoring checklist forms, attendance data, identified students who have been targeted for additional assistance, Regents exam item analyses and credit accumulation. They also analyze teacher created student assessments to ensure that they are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and students' IEP goals.
- The QTC uses progress monitoring to assess students' academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. The principal created a progress monitoring form that was adapted from IEP Direct and teachers use it, incorporating the students' IEP goals. The teacher identifies a student's IEP goal for learning that will take place over time. The teacher monitors the student's academic performance on a bi-weekly basis. They note progress toward meeting the student's goals by plotting and charting the students accuracy level on a given task or assignment. This allows teachers to utilize a graphic tool such as a line graph to monitor increases and decreases of their accuracy level. In addition, their performance level 1, 2, 3 or 4 is plotted and compared at the end of a given week. Based on these results, they adjust instructional practices and lessons to meet the individual students learning needs. This practice allows teachers to analyze student work in relationship to their IEP goals to assess each student's level of understanding more accurately.
- It is the principal's expectation for ongoing assessments to occur during lessons. Some teachers use exit slips, the traffic light system, where green means yes, yellow means maybe and red means no, to monitor student understanding of the lesson. It is the principal's expectation that assessment happens during the beginning, middle and end of each lesson. If a student does not understand a lesson, the student then works one-to-one with a paraprofessional. If the entire class does not understand, then teachers must re-teach a lesson. When the principal observes and does not see checks for understanding, she provides help and support to the assistant principal. Students self-assess by looking at their portfolios and critiquing their work. This allows teachers to provide intensive support to foster greater student progress, high expectations and enhanced socialization behaviors.

<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**

The vast majority of teachers across the school are engaged in structured collaborative inquiry and use this to strengthen their instructional practice and raise learning outcomes. Effective distributive leadership structures enable teachers to play an integral role in key decisions about curricula and teaching practices that effect student learning across the school.

**Impact**

The work of teacher teams has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence, improved pedagogy and increased student achievement for all learners. Shared leadership structures have built capacity for continual improvements in student learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School wide inquiry work has resulted in a collaborative environment where teachers are empowered to make decisions aimed at improving students' needs. At one observed interdepartmental teacher team meeting, an English teacher shared a student's written response about when it is important to be able to laugh at yourself and to describe a situation. This work was in response to a book that the students were reading. Teachers used the Looking at Student Work Using Protocols template to take notes on what they analyzed. Afterwards, teachers shared their thoughts and gave suggestions on how to help the student improve. This shared leadership has led the staff to establish a school wide structure used consistently throughout the school to identify, target and assess students to increase learning outcomes.
- The instructional cabinet is the main data team of the school, comprised of the teachers from the various sites, the English as a second language (ESL) teacher, the instructional coach, the alternate transition coordinator and the guidance counselor. They meet once a month to talk about instruction and to increase student outcomes throughout the school. They also discuss the strategies to implement the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) and the Four Pillars, A Vision for all New York City Public Schools. School leaders provide team leaders with data analysis on scholarship reports, credit accumulation, attendance, Regents line item results, formative assessments, New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) scores, progress towards graduation and the correlation among several of those data points. Administration then coaches the team leaders to interpret the data, to make inferences and then turnkey this information to their teams. They also share best practices. This process builds distributive leadership among teachers and creates optimal opportunities conducive to both teacher and student success.
- Each year, administration evaluates current structures and activities and makes the necessary adjustments to increase the impact of the work within the school community. This resulted in the addition of a professional learning goal for staff to the school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP).