



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

The Queens School of Inquiry

Secondary School Q252

**158-40 76 Road
Queens
NY 11366**

Principal: Meredith Inbal

**Date of review: January 6, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Joan Prince**

The School Context

The Queens School of Inquiry is a secondary school with 551 students from grade 6 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 40% Asian, 17% Black, 23% Hispanic, and 18% White students. The student body includes 2% English Language Learners and 15% students with disabilities. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 95.7%.

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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , 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	Well Developed
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

There is a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, families and students and effectively highlights goals connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

As a result, there is a sense of mutual accountability amongst the stakeholders. Parents play an active role in supporting students throughout the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration and faculty feel it is their responsibility to prepare students for college and careers by educating the whole child through a rigorous curriculum. The faculty have studied, piloted and practiced backward design. In addition, teachers have incorporated a mastery-based and standards-based assessment approach steeped in the Common Core Learning Standards and Next Generation Science Standards. Students on average, graduate with 35 college credits. All students know what is expected of them to matriculate and complete a degree in higher education. All grade 7 and 8 students participate in the *College Immersion College*, an early college initiative program to help students identify potential careers. This program from Queens College has college level work in core and non-core subject areas. There is a high graduation rate and 100% of the 2015 graduating class earned at least three college credits. All graduates received acceptance to at least one college or university of their choice, and the school scholarship report reveals a 95.17% overall pass rate.
- Teachers are fully invested through inquiry teams that focus on co-planning horizontally and vertically. By using the mastery protocol, students and teachers work to determine which standards need improvement and fill out a reassessment agreement to create a plan on how to relearn material and when to be reassessed. Parents, students, and teachers sign this agreement assuring that all parties are involved.
- Families are welcomed as full partners in the school experience. Beginning in grade 9 and continuing to graduation, parent meetings include registering for parent/child college workshops where they learn how to fill out FAFSA forms and do research on finding the right campus fit. The School Leadership Team, Parent Teacher Association and parent coordinator work together to support the college culture of the school. Parents stated that their reason for choosing this school is the college-going mind-set. A parent stated his pleasure in participating in a student-centered school and being able to fully collaborate with teachers committed to innovation, cooperation and mastery-based learning.
- Every Friday the principal sends out an email to staff to review lesson protocols, topics and questions submitted during the week. The Parent Coordinator updates the school's website with salient points from the weekly email, calendar updates and invitations to visit the school. A reflection from the prior Monday's professional development is included in the principal's address to the staff. For example, informed by the latest professional development, it is encouraged that parents and teachers visit classrooms and observe how the work aligns with instructional goals and is engaging students in high levels of cognitive activity, thus fostering strong family ties to build a supportive environment.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teacher strategies do not yet consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula for all students across the vast majority of classrooms. Discussions do not consistently reflect high levels of student participation and ownership.

Impact

There are missed opportunities to engage all learners in appropriately challenging tasks and for students to own their learning experience.

Supporting Evidence

- Students across grades demonstrate competency in literacy by completing performance tasks focusing on both fiction and non-fiction reading, speaking and listening. Assignments are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. The school administration and faculty review curricula to inform instruction and develop supports and extensions for all learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners. Challenging tasks that demonstrate higher-order thinking skills are embedded into the school's core belief around deepening conceptual understanding. Fluency in math and the use of text-based answers and academic vocabulary in English Language Arts (ELA) are part of the school's daily instructional focus, and exist across most classrooms. For example, in an English Integrated Co-Teaching and general education class with ELLs, the teacher stopped the class after noticing that some students needed backtracking to understand inferences in *The Catcher in the Rye*. This double period started with turn and talk and refocused students to complete prior work on the main character. However, in a grade 10 Integrated Co-Teaching science class, scaffolding of scientific rules and of using predictions in a lab environment was not in evidence.
- In classrooms visited students participated in class discussions by responding to both teacher and student-generated questions. Students not only answered questions, but asked questions and extended their own thinking by providing examples from text or their discussions to support their contributions. In a grade 7 history class after reviewing a video on the southern colonists the goals were stated clearly and students were able to do research and develop ideas around the challenges taking place in the creation of a permanent settlement in the Americas. However, though the class was in heterogeneous groupings there were no group discussions. Both teachers led a whole class discussion on these challenges providing examples to support students in their contributions, without many open-ended questions, missing an opportunity for student ownership.
- Lessons in most classrooms had multiple entry points embedded into their lessons. Students were observed sharing peer to peer tasks. In a grade 9 and 10 geometry class students were working on graphing using a jigsaw activity, with each student taking a different part of the question. Real world connections were made for students to make meaning of the lesson. The teacher provided differentiation and scaffolding through the use of worksheets and charts, as well as a vocabulary list to assist struggling learners in the class. Flexible groupings in most, but not all classes included remedial, on-level and enrichment groups, depending on the need to challenge all learners.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty engage in a rigorous process of curriculum and task development aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts.

Impact

There are purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Academic tasks emphasize higher-order thinking skills across classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- As stated in the Comprehensive Educational Plan and by the principal, the school's mission is to provide all students with the skills and learning experience required to successfully matriculate to and complete college early. In addition to grade 8 seminars on high school requirements, many units and lesson plans are aligned with the Understanding by Design protocol. A curriculum coach facilitates department teams in refining curriculum. Lesson plans in all content areas are aligned to the Common Core and include multiple strategies in completing academic tasks that require higher-order thinking skills. Teachers are beginning to incorporate Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* charts into lesson planning.
- Many students can successfully complete college coursework within the school. For example, partnering with CUNY Queens College, content department teams developed vertically aligned curricula. The school is in the process of revising all curricula to ensure they incorporate the Understanding by Design approach and are planned from common learning goals, the Common Core and department-wide instructional shifts including re-alignment to assessment criteria with Marzano rubrics. Marzano rubrics account for the acquisition of skills which build toward understanding using application and transfer of knowledge. The school is working toward moving away from traditional rubrics and shifting the focus towards the student's ability to demonstrate understanding, apply acquired skills via problem solving and transfer knowledge to unique scenarios.
- The school has a college liaison and a formalized benchmark criterion is aligned to CUNY pre-requisites and standards for college-ready behaviors. Coursework in most classes in the master schedule ensure access to Socratic Seminar, research methods, technology and math support courses. There are Pathways-aligned courses that fulfill the requirements for college undergraduates in English, history, and math. The school is working to achieve the goal that all students will participate in college work while at the school.
- Common Core Learning Standards found in curricular material include integrating multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each, creating interpretive and responsive texts to demonstrate knowledge and sophisticated understanding of the connections between life and literary work. The math and science departments work to translate quantitative information into visuals or words. For example, in an AP Biology class with both general education students and students with disabilities, students were working in pairs diagramming the structure of DNA and discussing genetic variations.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, assessments are aligned with curricula and offer a clear image of student mastery. In addition, assessment practices lead to effective curricular decision making.

Impact

Assessment practices lead to actionable and meaningful feedback for teachers and students and informed adjustments result in increased student mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Haiku Learning is used across the school as a comprehensive grading and reporting system. Marzano rubrics are embedded into daily practice. A majority of teachers use systems to monitor progress through data analysis of formative and summative assessments to provide meaningful feedback to students and to guide adjustments to units and lessons. As the principal stated, and as evidenced in the Comprehensive Educational Plan, teachers adjust curriculum based on diagnostics of incoming students, and use teacher-developed assessments, standardized test results and previous grades to make informed assessments and decisions about student learning outcomes.
- At professional development meetings, a session is devoted to either the Tuning Protocol or the Assessment Protocol where teachers divide into groups and have the opportunity to share a lesson, unit, or assessment for constructive feedback. At a teacher team meeting it was stated that students must be able to demonstrate ability to recall and label, before they can summarize, identify trends and interpret. To that end students must provide evidence that supports where on the rubric their level of knowledge is as well as what needs to be done to move to the next level. Grading policy is aligned to standards-based learning outcomes and reflects academic learning providing detailed feedback to inform student learning. It was determined by teacher teams that reassessment contracts have reduced in number with student gaining better grades.
- Students are encouraged to keep considering how they learn on their own and in groups. Research is taught using the writing process to help formulate ideas on a topic or subject with scoring guides, self-assessment reflections, peer revisions and teacher feedback forms. Assignments viewed at the student meeting showed feedback forms attached containing actionable feedback. Students brought finished and unfinished work to show the process, including written articles on Shakespeare where annotating was done prior to acting, with actionable feedback attached. A student stated that standard-based grading is like climbing a ladder of learning. Evidence of actionable feedback were questions such as “What is your next step?”, “When will you complete a final draft?”, and “What is your plan for the next assignment or performance task?” These questions were used to draw out what students learned and where they need to proceed. There is also feedback on homework assignments sending the message to students that homework is what we do in route to mastery, but not a statement of final mastery itself.

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity. Leadership structures provide a means for teachers to have input on key decisions about curricula and practice.

Impact

Teacher teams systemically analyze key elements of teacher work affecting classroom practice, assessment data and student work. This has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence, and improved pedagogy and student work.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade teams look at student work and case conference to determine how students are learning and what they need to move forward. Teacher teams create units and lesson plans aligned with the Marzano rubric as a guide to progressive learning, sharing with students and families. Teachers stated they are focused on vertical alignment, student work and their own practices to answer the question: “What do my students need to know, be able to do and to explain in order to produce graduation ready work?” Teachers at both team meetings agreed that the collective efforts of teams have a direct impact on their approaches to instruction, teacher leadership and student collaborations. Teachers use professional development and planning time to create performance tasks to promote mastery learning.
- There is an inquiry-based structure with a set of expectations that is driven by the school’s mission that all students can and will go to college early. There are strategic and collaborative endeavors during team meetings that give teacher to teacher meaningful feedback, as well as coach and administrative feedback. Middle school teams follow the Nest Case conferencing protocol, providing next steps to support individual students as evidence during the inquiry team Q&A meeting. Teachers spoke to the Nest Task Force from NYU about how professional development is used to plan with all core subject area teachers and special education teachers. There is an Integrated Co-Teaching leader who turnkeys the Nest Essentials including counseling, college seminars, junior and senior research projects and requirements for college to all teachers.
- Teachers are empowered to cross collaborate and do so effectively. For example, the art history teacher and the grade 6 teachers work together to make links across disciplines, such as in the study of ancient civilizations using math equations and drawings to explain the pyramids. Teacher teams have created an inquiry project with videos using different units, across grades with open access for student reference. It was determined at a math department meeting that students weak in algebra were making gains using materials provided through this flipped learning video project.
- The English department meeting observed meets once a week and uses the Turning Protocol for analyzing student work. Meeting objectives were stated and at this meeting argumentative writing was being analyzed to better align assessments and to look at the standards against current student work. Student work was examined and warm and cool feedback given with clarifying questions. It was determined that students were struggling with claims and counterclaims and more structure was needed for the work to be effective.