



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2015-2016**

**The Queens School for Leadership and Excellence**

**Elementary School Q349**

**88-08 164<sup>th</sup> Street  
Queens  
NY 11432**

**Principal: Tanya Bates Howell**

**Date of review: May 10, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Deborah Burnett-Worthy**

## The School Context

The Queens School for Leadership and Excellence is an elementary school with 110 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade kindergarten. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 41% Asian, 23% Black, 28% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 19% English Language Learners and 9% students with disabilities. Boys account for 59% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 is not available due to new school status.

## 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 <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	<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>Proficient</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

<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

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based professional collaborations and a distributive leadership system that are embedded into the school structure.

### Impact

The subsequent school wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners is the result of decisions made by school leadership and empowers teachers that affect student learning across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are engaged in structured inquiry collaborations that have resulted in documented increases in student performance as measured by benchmark assessments of leveled books, the math performance inventory and proficiency levels in English Language Arts (ELA), social studies and science standards.
- Teacher teams use assessment data from pre and post unit assessments, across subjects, and student work to make informed decisions about curricula and pedagogical adjustments. For example prior to the kindergarten teacher team meeting, teachers reviewed item analysis from a recent pre-unit assessment, selected anchor papers to represent current student understanding, and then analyzed their own student results. During the meeting, the team used an established protocol to identify the most important areas where students struggled. After identifying three key skills: labeling, including details in pictures and vocabulary usage, teachers reviewed the upcoming unit plan to make adjustments and identify important scaffolding supports. Some suggestions for inclusion were: shared writing, a visual dictionary and “who and why” questions.
- The distributive leadership structures at the school promote teachers’ collaborative planning and designing of curriculum maps, and unit plans to ensure alignment to Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. The result of this inquiry teamwork affects student learning across the entire school. Teacher teams design each writing unit around classroom activities and field trips to build common prior knowledge. Students share experiences and classroom readings become the foundation for student writing and tasks.

## Area of Focus

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

Across classrooms teaching practices consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and students are engaged in challenging work and discussions.

### Impact

All learners are appropriately engaged while participating in thought provoking tasks that demonstrate higher order thinking skills in work products and discussions. Some students, however, need a longer period time to think and meaningfully process material.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms students engage in rigorous discussions in pairs and in flexible groups, explain their thinking and justify their answers with evidence. For example, in a kindergarten Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classroom students were in differentiated, skill specific groups. Each group had its own objectives and supports. In one small group, students with a partner, shared evidence that they achieved their goal of rereading to see if what they read made sense from a book on the five senses. Students were able to explain to their partner what they read and explain how they used the modeled strategy to assess their explanations.
- Across all classrooms visited, teachers provided students with differentiated tasks that matched student goals and provided individuals and groups scaffolded supports to complete their tasks and demonstrate their thinking. For example, in one kindergarten Instructional Co-teaching math lesson, students were given individualized supports to complete the task. During whole group, each teacher matched the groups by proficiency and used different methods to offer students the opportunity to practice using manipulatives. During group practice, student supports varied among the groups wherein some groups received manipulatives such as a structured graphic organizers and counters, while other high-level groups worked without the supports. Groups were also provided scaffolded problems to solve. Although all students used a variety of methods to classify sort and graph their given manipulatives within their group and were able to correctly answer which shape is greater, many students were not able to answer the summary question: “How do you know? Explain your answer to your partner.” More than once, the minutes allotted for the summary or reflective portion of the task was not enough time for all students to fully demonstrate their understanding of the learning objective.
- Across classrooms, pedagogical practices observed yielded student work products, across a variety of learners, reflecting high levels of student thinking and participation. For example during center time in a pre-kindergarten class, a student told the teacher that the apple and the watermelon were like each other and unlike the banana because they both had lots of seeds on the inside. Another student who was participating in building a city with blocks during teamwork time informed the teacher, when she asked why the police car was parked by the bank instead of the police department, “that’s where he has to go to work to protect people.” A third student answered “green peppers grow!” when asked what happens if we plant these seeds, by his teacher showing the group a handful of green pepper seeds that she had just removed from the green pepper.

## 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 has a rigorous and clearly articulated approach to curriculum design that is aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and incorporates the instructional shifts.

### Impact

All students have a range of opportunities to both build skill as well as dig deeply into important topics. The curriculum ensures that students are engaged in challenging tasks that require them to think, reflect and problem solve.

### Supporting Evidence

- Using Hess' *Cognitive Rigor Matrix* as a guide, the school has enriched their curriculum units by implanting higher-order thinking skills within each subject. The staff has developed current, rigorous units of study and continues to align, analyze efficacy, and revise these units to meet the CCLS in the Understanding by Design (UBD) format. Additionally, in the social studies units, students are guided through challenging tasks that call upon the application of vocabulary and learned skills from nearly every content area.
- In mathematics teachers are integrating more sophisticated and explicit lessons around how to make connections and have added new tasks, which emphasize this higher-level skill. The curriculum provides increased opportunities for students to apply their "connections" skills, mental mathematics and computation fluency. Students explain their thinking and share strategies to solve problems. Lessons promote students working collaboratively to seek out the connections between simple arithmetic and more complex scenarios.
- The school's English Language Arts curriculum is congruous with the CCLS and incorporates the instructional shifts. The school has included the following units to guide the learning outcomes of their students. Exploring Opinion Writing, Sending Our Words Out into the World: Writing letters to make a change and Persuasive Writing. Each unit functions as a stepping-stone, providing the best pedagogical practices, rigorous assessment models and the supportive points of entry for all students. In addition, each unit of study is embedded with differentiated/tiered support.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers' assessment practices include checks for understanding, student self-assessment opportunities and results from common assessments.

### Impact

Teacher assessment practices provide actionable feedback to students. The school uses information from student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school issues progress reports three times per year; a Data Inventory created by the school informs these reports. The inventory outlines which type of data will be collected, when and why it will be collected, and what will be done with it. For example, *Fountas and Pinnell* levels are assessed in September, November, March, and May. The purpose is to support small group work and gauge comprehension. Data are used to plan for student groups, and create new data trails.
- The school has a stated philosophy about rubrics: Rubrics are for adults; checklists are for kids. More specifically, since the school is currently serving early childhood students in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, the philosophy is that the language of rubrics is to inform the adults, while a checklist takes the ideas of rubrics and condenses them into an easily readable format for students. For example, a kindergarten rubric for informational writing contains an item, "The writer stated his/her topic in the beginning and got the attention of readers." The rubric has four levels and is two pages long. The corresponding student checklist has simpler language, "I named my topic in the beginning." The student rubric also has illustrations next to each item and is scored as not yet, starting to, and yes.
- Teachers use formative assessments during the literacy block by taking low inference notes with guided reading groups. These notes also include future strategies. For example, the guided reading notes from a kindergarten class included observations such as, "mistook 'w' sound for a 'y,'" and "student was stuck on the word, 'us.'" Next steps included review long and short "u" sound and reteach strategies for "decoding difficult words."
- In a kindergarten class, students were self-assessing using strategies for encountering tricky words. One student was referring to a tricky word chart for help. Another explained that he was using his "super powers." These are strategies that students use when they self-assess. For example, "Eagle Eye" is a "power" where students look at the picture and beginning letter of a word, and "Stretchy Snake" reminds students to slowly stretch each sound together.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

The school has established a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to students and their families and provides supports to achieve those expectations.

**Impact**

These communications have resulted in students and families understanding the importance of their participation and support of student progress towards meeting the high expectations that have been set.

**Supporting Evidence**

- A weekly newsletter stating personal and academic goals and the implementation of the principles in the guidebook, “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People”, are the foundations of the communication of high expectations to the students of this school. Student’s awareness and acceptance of these principles was clearly evident in the student meeting. All students were able to name the principles and highlighted the principle of the week, Principle number 5, “Listen Before you Talk” which is the child friendly version of “Seek First to Understand then to be Understood.” The 100 Book challenge also signifies high academic expectations.
- Workshops are given twice a month offering parents training to support students at home. Topics such as: “Your child’s reading level”, “Project Based Learning” and “Where We Are in the Curriculum” relay the message of the school leader’s high expectations for family members. In addition to these workshops parents are offered an opportunity to receive Family certification in The Leader in Me, a program created in alignment with the principles of “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.” School leaders have articulated that these principles are the foundation of discovering the leader within each child. The principal has also communicated that developing these leadership skills prepares students, even at this young age for a great life of contribution to the world. Parents stated in the parent interview that they understand, agree with and support this expectation.
- The school holds regular sessions entitled, Parents as Learning Partners. Parents are invited to the school to sit in on their child’s class and learn side-by-side. Parents then have an opportunity to speak with administration about how they can continue to support their children at home with what they learned while participating in the lesson. Parents state that these sessions allow them to see high expectations of their children’s teachers and school leaders and reinforce them at home.