



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

**Queens Gateway to Health Sciences Secondary
School**

Secondary School Q680

**160-20 Goethals Avenue
Queens
NY 11432**

Principal: Judy Henry

**Date of review: May 19, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Deborah Burnett-Worthy**

The School Context

Queens Gateway to Health Sciences Secondary School is a secondary school with 727 students from grade 6 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 47% Asian, 35% Black, 11% Hispanic, and 3% White students. The student body includes 0% English Language Learners and 9% students with disabilities. Boys account for 42% of the students enrolled and girls account for 58%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 98.0%.

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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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	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	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Higher order skills are emphasized in curricula and tasks in a coherent way.

Impact

All students, including English language learners (ELLs), students with disabilities and highest achieving learners, are consistently exposed to higher-level tasks across grades and content areas, are required to demonstrate their thinking, and are provided with the necessary supports to access those tasks leading to college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans across all content areas revealed that in-class tasks consistently emphasize higher-order thinking skills such as developing claims and citing evidence, developing logical arguments, analyzing information from multiple sources, and applying concepts in real world situations.
- The school has identified specific college and career readiness skills connected to reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language and coherently embedded them across all content areas and grades. A review of unit maps in global history, math, and English Language Arts revealed purposeful planning by teachers for how students would show mastery of these skills. This process has resulted in steady increases in credit accumulation across grades, specifically for students in the schools lowest third, which helped the school to be identified as exceeding their targets with regards to closing the achievement gap.
- The school has created templates for curriculum maps, unit plans and lesson plans that have been adopted by the vast majority of teachers and has developed a process for teachers and administrators to peer review all teacher work products. The principal was able to show evidence of curriculum maps, unit plans and lesson plans across all content areas and grades that had been revised, based on peer feedback, to ensure alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards.
- Unit plans across all content areas provide numerous scaffolds and entry points such as purposeful grouping, flexible use of time, one to one conferencing, sentence starters, leveled texts, graphic organizers, key vocabulary identified, and text already partially annotated.
- All departments have clearly defined criteria for what students need to know and what skills they need to master to move to the next grade, ensuring coherency across grades and subject areas. A review of the department action plans showed alignment to these identified skills as well as specific strategies teachers would use throughout the year to ensure all students reached mastery level. Advanced classes have also been created to extend the learning opportunities, push the thinking and further challenge the highest achieving learners at this school.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching strategies strategically provide multiple entry points and high-quality supports for all learners. Student discussion and work products reflect high levels of student thinking, participation and ownership.

Impact

In the vast majority of classrooms, all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, are motivated and actively engaged in classroom activities and discussions, resulting in them producing meaningful work products that prepare them for college and career.

Supporting Evidence

- In the vast majority of classrooms observed, students used academic vocabulary and evidenced-based accountable talk, cited evidence to support their claims, annotated text, applied what they were learning in real world applications and used rubrics to self-and peer assess their work. During student interviews, when asked to describe how they learn in their classes, students spoke to all of these practices and how they are commonplace and consistent across all grades and subject areas.
- Purposeful grouping of students was seen in the vast majority of classrooms. In a grade 12 math class, students were grouped according to how they had performed on the last end-of-unit exam so that specific groups could be assigned similar problems that they had struggled with on the test. In a grade 10 English class, after the “Do Now” was completed, students were grouped based on their own assessment of their understanding of the exercise as well as their ability to fully understand the homework from the previous night.
- When asked, the vast majority of students could articulate what they were learning and why it was important. In a grade 12 Physics class where students were learning about the relationship between energy and power, students explained how they could apply this knowledge to solve everyday problems such as maintaining and designing roller coasters. In a grade 10 English class, students were able to explain how annotating text and writing the gist were the first steps towards helping them understand the text and to eventually cite evidence from it to defend their claim.
- Teachers use a variety of strategies to ensure that all students can access the material. In an eleventh grade history class, certain students were provided with key vocabulary so that they could more easily access the text. In a grade 10 science class, certain students were able to use their notes from the previous day to complete the assignment in the allotted time. In a grade 11 English class, the teacher worked individually with certain students to provide scaffolds.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use assessments and rubrics aligned to the school's curricula to provide actionable feedback to students and teachers. Teachers consistently use ongoing checks for understanding and students self-assess, allowing teachers to make effective adjustments to meet all learners' needs.

Impact

The monitoring of student progress at the teacher team and classroom level results in all students having a clear understanding of their next steps for demonstrating mastery in all content areas and increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use common end-of-unit assessments in all content areas that are aligned to the school's curricula and use the resulting data to track student performance. Action plans and units are modified based on student work. For example, a grade 10 algebra unit on statistics was modified to include additional lessons on finding central tendencies of a set of data, interpreting a scatter plot to find the line of best fit, representing a set of data using set notation, and representing outcomes using a tree diagram.
- The use of rubrics accompanied by specific targeted actionable feedback from teachers to students is an established ritual for improving student achievement across the school that the principal, teachers and students were able to speak about. Student work displayed in hallways included rubrics with identified areas of strength and areas of growth. In addition to individual feedback to students, teachers also provide next steps for the class as a whole that were also posted in the hallways. Students spoke to how they regularly use rubrics in class and with homework assignments and how teachers confer with them to provide next steps, specifically related to the school-wide focus of using evidence in their writing and speaking to support a claim.
- The school has adopted a school-wide system of checking for understanding by asking students to self-assess at various times throughout the lesson so that teachers or other students in the class can assist them with their next learning steps. This practice was observed at various times in all classrooms visited. In addition to this strategy, teachers used exit slips, one on one conferencing with students, conferencing with groups, and peer and self-assessment to check for understanding and make effective adjustments. For example, in an eleventh grade English class, students were originally paired with their "By Buddy", another student who sits next to them so they can engage in a quick turn and talk, and then self-selected which group they would be working in after conferencing with the teacher. In a tenth grade science classroom, as the students worked in groups to determine the ages of rock layers, the teacher conferenced with each group to determine their understanding of the process and its connection to the previous night's homework and recorded their answers as well as any further questions that they might have that could be shared with the whole class.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. Leadership and staff successfully partner with families to support student progress towards high expectations connected to college and career readiness.

Impact

The school has a culture of mutual accountability and staff takes ownership on improving their own practice and creating true partnerships with parents that result in increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has a very detailed professional development calendar that was collaboratively created with teacher leaders and is aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, the school's instructional focus, as well as the work of creating and modifying curriculum. The school's professional development team frequently facilitates or co-facilitates with the administration and several teachers referenced how their ability to offer large group, small group and individual professional development has helped to create coherence across the school and improve teacher practice. The principal was able to show evidence that there were increases in teacher observation scores, in component 3B of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. This section of the framework speaks to the teacher's ability to create and deliver higher-order thinking questions. Scores increased after professional development was focused on this area.
- Parents spoke about teachers not only communicating with them on a daily basis using the school's website Pupil Path, but that they also regularly provide them with strategies and access to specific websites during parent teacher conferences and during parent workshops to support their children when they are working at home. Parents mentioned how teachers are always available by phone, email or text and frequently stay late into the evening to work with students. Parents commented that they believe the school does an excellent job of helping them navigate the college application process and work closely with students from ninth grade until they graduate to ensure they are college and career ready. Parents spoke of their attendance at college and career events created to train them as advocates for their children. One parent stated, "The school has equipped me to help my daughter get into the college of her choice. I would have never been able to do it without the school's support." A review of the school's High School Quality Snapshot revealed that the school's four year graduation rate rose three percentage points to 97.7%, which is well above the city and borough averages, and 90.2% of students enrolled in a postsecondary program within six months, which is also much higher than the city and borough averages.
- Parents spoke about how all staff members model the school's core values and regularly discuss them with students and parents. Several parents mentioned how they believe the school's student mentoring program, where upperclassmen mentor ninth and tenth graders, is an example of how the school has created opportunities for students to learn from their teachers as well as each other; a skill that parents felt would be especially important when they graduate and either join the workforce or go to college.

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

All teachers are engaged in consistently examining teacher practice and student data within inquiry based structured professional collaborations. Distributed teacher leadership is embedded across all areas of the school.

Impact

School-wide instructional coherence is seen throughout all classrooms and teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect teaching and learning across the school, resulting in increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet to share best strategies and provide feedback to improve their practice. For example, English teachers spoke to how they have developed a common strategy for students to use when establishing a claim that has led to increases in students' ability to organize their writing. Math teachers have developed a common practice for students to self-reflect at the end of each unit and use a common data file to examine student responses. Teachers also mentioned how they established a practice of visiting each other's classrooms after professional development to give feedback on topics learned in either large or small group sessions or during their professional learning communities.
- During two teacher team meetings observed, teachers spoke about how they have a strong voice in school-wide instructional decisions and their leadership is not only valued but actively sought after. For example, teachers collaboratively worked with the administration to create professional learning communities associated with high-need areas identified through an examination of school-wide data and teacher surveys. Teachers chosen collaboratively by the administration and teacher leaders facilitate these sessions and best practices are shared across the school. Topics under study are Universal Design for Learning, classroom procedures, classroom management, creating higher-order questions, and pre-planning lessons using student work. A high school team recognized an increase from an average score of two points to three points in essay scores on Regents exams after they agreed on curriculum changes to support writing skills.
- Teachers discussed how they actively seek each other's input on all matters pertaining to curriculum and instruction and how this established practice has led to improvements in their practice and a strong culture of teacher ownership across the school. Teachers specifically mentioned how the practice of peer reviewing curriculum maps, unit plans, lesson plans and action plans has led to greater coherence and alignment to the Common Core. In addition to these regularly scheduled meetings, the vast majority of teachers work in smaller, informal learning groups during prep periods or communicate through emails to discuss best practices for specific students who may need additional support.
- During a teacher team meeting, teachers were engaged in looking at student work and analyzing a teacher's lesson plan to determine next steps. During the meeting, teachers used accountable talk and specifically mentioned how they model these practices at all times so that if students come across them working in their teacher team meetings or even engaging in professional conversation around the school, they can see these practices in action both inside and outside of the classroom.