



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Queens Vocational and Technical High School**

**High School 600**

**37 – 02 47 Avenue**

**Queens**

**NY 11101**

**Principal: Denise Vittor**

**Dates of review: May 29 – 30, 2007**

**Reviewer: Geof Timms**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Queens Vocational and Technical High School has an enrollment of 1151 students in grades 9 through 12. The population comprises approximately 64% Hispanic students, 14% White students, 13% Black students and 8% Asian and students from other ethnic groups. There are approximately 16% special education students and a further 11% who are English language learners. Recent arrivals are mostly from Ecuador, Poland and China. The attendance rate has improved recently but at around 82% is still lower than similar and other City schools.

The school has been established since 1929 to provide a vocational, technical and academic education for its students. It has recently been reorganized internally into four small learning communities. The school is also part of a credit recovery program to address a variety of issues around achievement and to help staff work more closely as teams.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school provides a high quality licensed and certificated careers and technical education.
- The principal is seen as a dynamic, creative and visionary leader.
- The school provides a high level of care for students on a personal as well as academic level.
- Achievement has improved over the last 3 years, especially through the use of a range of special education programs.
- Improvements in the use of data are helping the school set goals for the small learning communities and identify better the achievement of individual students.
- The school is a calm and orderly learning environment where adults and students show respect for each other.
- The principal, administration and staff are willing to seek and take on new ideas, programs and projects to try and improve achievement.
- There is a strong focus on accurate and honest self-evaluation.
- There are strong partnerships with community organizations and very good opportunities for internships which help students gain experience in the world of work.
- Attendance figures have improved as a result of the school's efforts.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue efforts to raise student achievement and improve pass rates.
- Ensure the growing range of available data is analyzed and used consistently in planning, professional development and teaching.
- Seek mechanisms for teachers to be more involved in planning professional development, in spreading good ideas and methodologies, and in creating more active learning in academic subjects.
- Sustain the efforts being made to develop stronger links with parents and engage them in their children's learning.
- Develop more consistent rubrics for teachers' assessments of students work.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

This school has a good number of strengths, especially in the vocational and careers education it offers. The quality of the work in the business, electrical, plumbing, cosmetology and information technology departments is high, and this is reflected in the credits and diplomas the students receive. Much of this success is due to the high quality instruction and student involvement in active learning that is evident. The school is aware that these strengths can be transferred where appropriate to the academic classes. The principal is energetic and very involved in the life of the school. She is seen as a creative and visionary person who works very hard for the good of the students and who is willing to take on and try new ideas or programs to improve achievement. The reorganization of the school into small learning communities has already proved successful in delegating more responsibility and creating a more coherent identity for each faculty.

The school has begun to receive and to generate more detailed information about individual students' progress and achievement. It is at the early stages of using this data to identify the progress of individuals and groups, and to use this information in planning and delivering effective classes. However, the strong commitment of the principal and her staff has resulted in continual improvements in achievement over the last three years and the school is now close to achieving the expected levels in students' annual yearly progress. This represents good improvement.

### How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school closely monitors student achievement when they start in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Partly due to the nature of the school, with its technical and vocational focus, there are currently only around 20% of the students who have been very successful in their elementary or middle schools. The gathering of data regularly and using this to set appropriate tasks is developing, although this is better in many of the vocational classes. The school uses data well to effectively identify students who need extra instruction or support with special education, and has developed a range of extra programs to help with this. Teachers record assessment outcomes of the students in their classes but this information is not consistent across the school and is not used by all teachers to offer sufficiently differentiated tasks.

The school uses data from the city well but this has always been data based on students who have left the school. Performance and progress are measured accurately and comparisons with similar schools made. The use of this data, although historical in nature, has helped improve the scores of females in mathematics, as teachers have addressed some students' perceptions of the subject. In addition more data is now available to analyze ethnicity and this has been used to highlight some underachievement among White pupils and male Hispanic pupils. Part of the reason for this is due to the fact that

older students are able to become employed before they graduate and thus are more likely to be absent from school. The school is aware that it needs to address the students' perceptions of the importance of the academic subjects alongside the vocational. Recent efforts to improve this have been very successful. A project involving the cosmetology students with those working on electrical diplomas also used some writing and creative skills very effectively.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The principal and cabinet have high aspirations and these underpin the setting of appropriate goals, as well as developing practical action plans to help achieve them. The cabinet use data to prepare the goals for the Comprehensive Education Plan. These good goals focus appropriately on improving the graduation rate and raising achievement in the academic subjects. The vocational faculties have very clear goals and have high expectations in the way they help students achieve the required credits and diplomas. These are continually improving as shown by the improved number of students currently achieving the New York State standards in computing. Data is reviewed within small learning communities during their common planning times. This is currently happening on a more regular basis than it had in the past. As a result of this constant review of data, the school has set up an after school program to tutor students more directly for the Regents examinations. Programs for those students who require special education or extra support are well-developed and successful, especially in supporting those who have been in holdover classes or who require extra instruction in summer schools.

The school is improving the way it uses data to restructure the schedules of some students and teachers, so that all classes and coursework can be completed alongside, for example, internships. Those who do not make adequate progress in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade are identified and take part in a special program to help raise their achievement. The school has not yet developed good systems for reviewing the success of such programs in order to ensure their success and consistency. Parents are not always clear about the role of the school and the different requirements of the vocational and the academic aspects. The school tries hard to communicate with them through newsletters in two languages, and through parent conferences. The school has plans to help parents become more aware of the changes and expectations of different instructional methods and especially of the importance of completing graduation.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

This aspect of the school's work is successful for the vocational courses and recent changes to academic classes are beginning to show an improvement in achievement towards the New York State standards. The school realized from a study of available data that there was a need to review instruction and to a lesser extent the curriculum. From this came evidence showing that the careers and technical education methodologies differed

from the academic, but that there were strengths that could be transferred from one class to another.

The principal and assistant principals ensure that teachers are accountable for improving instruction. The senior staff found that teachers were not always differentiating their instruction to match their students' learning styles. Students were failing the academic subjects because of a lack of practical learning and application-based activities, which are methods that were proving successful in the vocational subjects. The school is currently focusing on developing these kinds of instructional methods in the academic classes, by encouraging more active learning, which has yet to be fully reflected in results. Among other changes, the school has altered the schedule to enable more time on English language arts and mathematics for those students needing greater support. Decisions about the budgeting and purchase of resources are linked to the analysis of available data. Students' needs are a major factor in decisions about staffing matters and they talk positively about the relationships they have with the staff. The engagement of students on the vocational programs is exceptional. It is rare to see such a concentrated and consistent hard-working effort at achieving the diplomas and credits the students will need to graduate. The engagement in the academic classes is not as consistent as in the vocational classes.

Attendance is a high priority at the school. Efforts made to improve this have been largely successful in bringing the figure up to around 82%. Parents do not always support the school's efforts, especially once older students have the credits they need to enable them to take up some form of employment.

**Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The principal has a firm vision when hiring staff. This starts with teachers having a clear motivation for teaching the school's student population, as well as having the appropriate content knowledge and understanding. This is true whether the position is for vocational or academic classes. Many of the staff in the careers and technical classes have high expectations which offer challenge to high achievers. In one case, in the electrical shop, the students suggested an extension to an activity themselves which involved developing an overhead system which ran round the room. This kind of activity is less commonly seen in the academic classes. The school is currently working to adjust the curriculum in response to the latest data available and this is due to be shared with the parents in September.

Professional development has been successful in improving teachers' skills. A good example is the school's participation in the New York City Writing Project. As part of this, with the help of a consultant, the school has reviewed opportunities for writing across the curriculum. In addition, the literacy coach has created opportunities to spread good practice between teachers. Further evidence of the school's willingness to look outside for support and good ideas, has been the involvement with the "High Schools that do Well" project. This has also resulted in external consultants providing useful advice and good ideas for improving the quality of instruction. It also resulted in the development of the small learning communities and this has created more delegation of leadership and more ownership of the students' progress amongst the staff.

The principal monitors the work of the school in a regular but largely informal way. The assistant principals carry out more formal classroom observations and evaluations. These are intended to be of benefit to the teachers and to improve instructional skills. They therefore consist of discussions and feedback of strengths and areas that could be improved, and there is evidence of clear improvement in teachers' strategies because of this work. Teachers would like to be more involved in planning so the time and effort put into it has clear benefits in the classroom. However, they do feel well supported in the school and they speak highly about the ethos of sharing good practice that exists. The principal is seen by many students, parents and staff in a very positive way. She is perceived by many as a dynamic and visionary leader who clearly has a well-developed capacity to lead the school through further improvement and achievement. She ensures students have the opportunity to achieve well through a range of strategies appropriate to their ages and capabilities.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school is working hard to improve this aspect of its work. There are long term goals, clearly identified in the Comprehensive Education Plan, intended to improve performance in English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. These goals are based appropriately on available data, as are any necessary changes to instruction or professional development. A specific current goal is to increase students' engagement in the academic classes. Benchmarks are set by the cabinet and they frequently meet and adjust these as necessary. A good example of this is the adjustments made in response to attendance data.

Comparisons between students and classes, and between subjects, are new and yet to be fully part of the school's evaluation of its success. However, new more detailed data is helping with this and it is already possible to see how the school is beginning to use these comparisons. The monitoring of the students' vocational classes is based around on-going teachers' assessments and the students' achievement of diplomas, certificates and licenses. The progress in academic subjects has been less well tracked in the past. The school has begun to improve this and teachers are now creating rubrics for the day-to-day assessment of students' achievement.

The creation of the small learning communities has enabled some comparisons of data between these. While it is at an early stage, this has already shown differences in attendance rates. The school recognized that there was a need to have more information about current achievement and progress and the small learning communities have helped meet this aim. A data team has been created involving teachers, counselors and assistant principals with the task of reviewing data in more depth, interpreting it and sharing the findings with staff. This work has already begun. Guidance counselors work hard to track students' progress and encourage them to meet graduation requirements. To help with this some courses are linked to two local colleges.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Queens Vocational and Technical High School (HS 600)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.</b>	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		X	

\* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.		X	
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.		X	
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	