



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Queens Vocational and Technical High School

**High School 600
37-02 47th Avenue
Queens
NY 11101**

Principal: Denise Vittor

**Dates of review: May 19 – 21, 2008
Lead Reviewer: Joel T. DiBartolomeo**

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well
What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review
Overall evaluation
How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Queens Vocational and Technical High School is a high school with 1120 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 13% Black, 66% Hispanic, 11% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 60% of the students enrolled and girls account for 40%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 82%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 59% eligibility.

The school provides a vocational, technical and academic education for its students. Students are offered a combination of Regents based academic preparation and a choice from among eight Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. The school is its third year of reorganization into four Small Learning Communities (SLCs), each with dedicated staff, space and resources. The three Small Learning Communities are the School of Skilled Building Trades, the School of Entrepreneurial Studies and the School of Computer, Electronics and Engineering Technologies. In addition, the School provides the Exploration and Discovery program for grade 9 students.

Due to an injury in late November 2007, the principal has not returned to the school since.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders are inspired by the school's vision and are committed to the future development of the school.
- Partnerships with outside organizations support the different career foci of the school and students' academic and personal growth.
- The school supports teachers new to the profession and school well through mentoring and the collegiality of staff.
- The school uses a variety of data well to identify and monitor the performance and progress of students.
- The school has an efficient process for identifying students in greatest need for interventions.
- The school has good support for special education students, who are placed in least restrictive environments.
- The school offers students a wide array of curriculum choices and venues in which to learn.
- The school has good supports for grade 9 students who benefit from the personalized environment established for them.
- School Learning Community leaders have created environments that center on trust, care and respect for one another's well being.
- The principal uses the budget efficiently to provide a wide range of staff and resources to ensure all students are well supported.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop long-range school plans that identify plans for sub-groups of interest clearly and set goals against which the school can judge the impact.
- Involve all school constituents in improvement efforts and ensure that the process as well as the plans and goals are well known.
- Build staff capacity to use data to measure the effectiveness of interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas.
- Identify and develop strategies to improve differentiation in the classroom to maximize personalized learning.
- Ensure that parents receive information about how their children can improve and how they can support the learning process.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Despite her absence from the school, the principal remains a strong force in maintaining the school's vision. The school benefits from the leadership capacity of each member of the leadership team. Together with their school support organization network leader, they have continued to enact the major initiatives in the school. They show commendable personal and professional commitment to the school and ownership of their roles as leaders.

At its current stage of organizational development, the school has achieved a secure base for on-going improvement and change. Students function well as independent learners and work collaboratively on projects that are inquiry and experientially based. In each of the school learning communities (SLC), there is a strong focus on academic outcomes, support for struggling students and the use of data. However, the practices that support these features, such as differentiated instruction are not yet consistent and refined.

Most staff seem to have adjusted well to the reorganization into SLCs. At this stage of development, it is not yet clear whether or not SLCs have had the intended impact on student academic outcomes, although a number of favorable trends are evident at the school. Over the last three years, there has been an increase in the promotion rate for grade 9 students of approximately 15%. Attendance and overall outcomes for the five required Regents' areas have improved and, the school has seen a modest increase in its graduation rate. However, data analysis is not sufficiently rigorous.

Since its last review, the school has made good process in most areas recommended for improvement. The school has improved its practices related to organizing and analyzing data at most levels of learning. There is a fair degree of active involvement in all subject areas. Passing rates for grade 9 students and the attendance rate have improved significantly. The degree of professional community that exists in the school is good and has the potential to support the identification and migration of sound practices across organizational settings. Meaningful parent involvement continues to be a challenge for the school. While the school has as an initiative to make the use of rubrics to assess student work, without more consistent practice, utilization is not yet secured.

The school's inquiry team has selected a target population of students and is working effectively to improve their abilities in math. While a baseline and June goal were established, assessment activity to measure progress over time or to measure the effectiveness of the change strategy are not evident.

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school uses a variety of data very well to monitor its progress in both State and local accountability systems. This data is filtered through the school's leadership team and subsequently disaggregated by SLC and presented to SLC staff. This data is further analyzed to identify the performance and trends of grades, classes and individual students. The school makes suitable comparisons to similar schools. Visits to these schools provides staff with valuable opportunities for professional and organizational learning.

The school has begun to use some disaggregated data to identify and compare the performance of different groups of students in the school. However, the school is not using data systematically to understand the progress of English Language Learners, students achieving in the bottom third or other sub-groups of interest whose achievement is significantly lower than the school or City averages. Due to this, the school is not in a strong position to identify needed supports. Data is reviewed prior to students attending the school for scheduling purposes and is also used to identify students who need additional academic support.

Staff have improved their ability to use data to plan for instruction as a result of the different training options in which they have participated. Teachers generate and gather data in their classrooms, but much of it is not aggregated up to school leaders.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The leadership team reviews data and goals are set for the entire school. Each SLC uses these findings to create their own unique action plan. The school has not used its progress report data to create plans and goals that would have it meet its expected progress report target for 2007-2008. There exists a considerable disparity in student performance outcomes between and among sub-groups. Because differentiated plans and goals, except for special education students, are not apparent, school improvement efforts are compromised. School leaders are aware for instance that Hispanic males are operating outside of the school's sphere of success, yet the school has no specific goals or plans for this group. Of equal concern are the number of credits being earned by third year students. With the exception of physics Regents, there is a downward trend of Regents' results beyond the basic requirements, low weighted Regents' scores, a drop-out rate that exceeds the City average and uneven outcomes for sub groups. Not recognizing these data trends, precludes the creation of plans and goals for those students not meeting with success or the identification of internal accountability targets for school staff. Department of Education tools available to the school have not yet been fully utilized.

A good feature of the school is its process for assisting students to overcome differences in learning capacity. Individual students in greatest need of improvement are identified and suitable plans and goals are set for them. A recent State audit has contributed to a more strategic focus on students with individual educational plans. Except for special education and target population students, school leaders recognize, rightly, that the practice of planning and setting goals at the individual student level is not yet securely embedded throughout the school.

While the school presented its goals and plans to all teachers, they are not sufficiently known to meaningfully direct or reinforce behaviors to support the implementation of school plans. The school's efforts to inform, involve and enable parents to become active partners in the learning process have had good results in the School Exploration and Discovery. This practice is not yet secure in the other SLCs.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school offers students a wide array of curriculum choices, including the arts, and venues in which to learn. The school's curriculum meets all State mandates for both vocational certification and academic requirements. The school also has a credit recovery program that operates during the regular school day. Special education students receive good support in appropriate settings.

School leaders have created an environment of mutual trust between and among students and staff, creating a positive environment for learning and teaching. Teachers make good use of activities that actively involve students, but this is not a consistent practice across the school. In addition, teachers are uncertain about what the school expects of them when attempting to differentiate learning. This makes it difficult to personalize learning, although this practice is emerging. While teachers receive ample data, there is no uniform use of baseline assessments or diagnostics to define student strengths and areas for improvement.

The school uses the budget efficiently to provide a wide range of instructional settings, special licensed staff and classroom resources. The school now has a full time attendance teacher who makes home visits. A significant increase in the attendance average over last year's results is a reflection of the sound policies and procedures to handle attendance issues.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The administration use a rubric to evaluate learning and teaching, resulting in teachers receiving useful and regular feedback, both formal and informal, regarding their teaching.

School leaders are aware of the development of their teachers, but there is no individual goal setting with teachers or systematic way of tracking the differences among them with

respect to the efficacy of their teaching. While the school uses some data to identify professional development options, teachers largely make their own decisions for professional development from a menu provided by the school's partners and school support organization.

Teachers report that they learn best from one another and are appreciative of the administration's support for activities that facilitate this way of improving instruction. Team meetings are utilized well to share ideas, plan, and share practices. Teachers take advantage of informal opportunities to observe each other's practice, but there is no formal process for evaluation or reflection. A formal mentoring program and the collegiality of staff is effective in supporting new teachers to the school and to the profession well.

The school's guidance department provides excellent advice and support for students and works closely with SLC staff to ensure that expectations for referral and intervention take place as planned. The grade 9 advisory program provides an effective setting for teachers to get to know their students well and to offer them good supports as they transition into high school. The school has developed over 40 constructive partnerships with outside entities that support students' academic and personal development.

Students and parents report issues related to "hall roaming" and class cutting as well as issues related to respect and safety. To help reduce this, the school has enacted a consistent set of policies and procedures to maintain orderly classroom and school environments.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has developed school-wide goals and each SLC has a plan for improving student outcomes. Leaders review progress towards achieving these goals at suitable intervals and take measures to make adjustments. However, these goals are stated in whole-school terms, so there are no developmental goals, timeframes and revising of plans for sub groups. As such, the school does not address equity issues sufficiently.

Each marking period teacher outcomes are reviewed and recommendations and adjustments are made where appropriate. While the school measures teacher performance against school goals, the process does not include the inclusion of teacher goal setting and attention to sub group performance.

Grades are the primary data source to measure effectiveness of school plans. In grade 9, the teachers have created end of marking period assessments that offer data at the standard and skill level. The consistent use of baseline and periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas is not secure. Consequently, this diminishes the impact of measuring specific interventions for individual or student sub groups.

The leadership team shares the vision of transforming the school into four smaller personalized settings and serves to unify their actions in the school improvement process.

| Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student. | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| To what extent does the school ... | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
| 4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction? | | | | X | |
| 4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers? | | | X | | |
| 4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment? | | | | X | |
| 4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school? | | | | X | |
| 4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals? | | | | X | |
| 4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents? | | | X | | |
| 4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students? | | | | X | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 4 | | | | | X |

| Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning. | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| To what extent do ... | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
| 5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments? | | | X | | |
| 5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments? | | | | X | |
| 5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas? | | | X | | |
| 5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals? | | | X | | |
| 5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes? | | | X | | |
| 5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning? | | | | X | |
| 5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change? | | | | X | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 5 | | | | | X |

| | |
|---|--|
| ◇ | Outstanding |
| + | Well Developed |
| ✓ | Proficient |
| ➤ | Underdeveloped with Proficient Features |
| Δ | Underdeveloped |