

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

Queens Occupational Training Center

High School 721

57-12 94 Street

Queens

NY 11373

Principal: Beth Rudolph

Dates of review: May 4 - 6, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Corinne Brown

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Queens Occupational Training Center is a high school with 408 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 30% Black, 40% Hispanic, 12% White, and 19% Asian students. The student body includes 50% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 62% of the students enrolled and girls account for 38%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 82.9%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

This District 75 special education school is multi-sited, serving students with significant to severe disabilities requiring a high level of support. All students follow alternate assessment non-graded programs. Class staff ratios reflect students' needs, at 6:1:1 (students to teacher to paraprofessional), 8:1:2, 12:1:4 and 12:1:1. The site provides self-contained classes for bilingual and English language learners. Many students participate in a work-study program and are off-site for four or five days a week. The school has a new principal this year.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Under the passionate, determined leadership of the new principal, who firmly places students at the heart of all decision-making, the re-energized school community reflects on how best to improve student outcomes. One parent appreciatively commented, "The school has had a metamorphosis." Initiatives already show pleasing results in improved student attendance and increased parental involvement. Students understand the high expectations for success and self-regulation of behaviors, assisted by a successful school-wide behavior support system. The administrators and committed staff set the calm learning tone and serve as excellent role models for students. Consequently, students feel safe to take risks as learners and reciprocate the respect and trust afforded them. Teachers and leaders work with related service providers and paraprofessionals to tailor the curriculum according to service category needs. Vocational, life-skill and academic development valuably run in tandem with social and emotional growth, empowering students to self-advocate and become independent. However, some lessons miss opportunities to extend learning through effective questioning and tasks do not always offer sufficient individual challenge. Feedback to students on their work does not consistently indicate next steps or reinforce reasons for success. Individual educational plans rightly drive all instructional planning. Not all parents and students understand the next individual steps for learning or how to reinforce skills. Within a heightened awareness of data-driven decision-making, teachers maintain ongoing assessment information in useful binders. At present, the school does not have an efficient way to synthesize and analyze all data. Consequently, it does not always formalize strategic planning, evaluation and revision. Goals at whole school, subject or cohort level do not consistently contain precise interim monitoring indicators. Ongoing measurement of progress toward the goal, therefore, lacks robustness. Teachers have professional growth plans, as part of their reflective practice and commitment to improve student outcomes. Although these are at an early stage in sophistication, staff are reflective practitioners who willingly participate in formal and informal professional development. Led by the new principal, the school continues to build on its solid foundations to make a difference in students' lives.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- High levels of respect, trust and the sense of responsibility evident in all interpersonal relationships throughout the school leads to student self advocacy and independence.
- The emphasis on systematic data collection and analysis means that teachers and leaders maintain a good picture of student performance and progress in many areas, linked to individual education plans.
- Through high expectations, goal-setting, concerted outreach and school-wide initiatives, leaders and staff emphasize positive behaviors and secure increased student attendance and parental involvement.
- The organized and motivating learning environment supports the carefully tailored curriculum that addresses students' needs, with valuable opportunities for academic, vocational and functional life skills' development.
- The mutually supportive teachers, related service providers and paraprofessionals share a dedication to improve student outcomes, emphasize real-life relevance in instruction and show commitment to enhance their own skills to meet students' needs.
- The new principal's passion, drive and determination, galvanizes the community, setting the tone of accountability and open exchange of information, empowering students to transition to less restrictive environments and employability.

What the school needs to improve

- Explore ways to aggregate all data to enable efficient data analysis and support informed strategic planning.
- Sharpen goals, including those for all subject areas and teachers' professional growth plans, so they consistently refer to student outcomes and have measurable interim indicators of progress to ensure robust monitoring and evaluation.
- Ensure that all lessons offer challenge, effective questioning and feedback and provide opportunities for active learning and extended thinking by matching activities to individual needs.
- Continue to build the understanding of students and parents so they can support the achievement of individual educational plan goals and other skills in the home and community setting.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Within a heightened culture of data driven instruction and decision-making, teachers, routinely and regularly gather information about student performance. Paraprofessionals and related service providers contribute usefully to this process. Staff use both summative and formative assessments, relevant to service categories, to build this picture across different skills and subjects. In this way, all teachers collect pertinent information in the new uniform student portfolios. These include customized and in-class informal assessments, checklists and authentic student work or other evidence of mastery. Teachers make valuable use of photographs of students in practical settings to show skills' development. Individual educational plans, behavior plans and points sheets add to the comprehensive range of ongoing information on each student. Throughout the year, useful tools, such as the Brigance goals summary sheet and individual educational plan tracking sheet maintain the focus and inform regular checks on progress. Leaders carefully analyze data by service category, gender and for English language learners, and longitudinally, to note anomalies and implement action. In this way, the Title III Saturday program supports English language learners math skills' development. Targeted and school-wide efforts from weekly analysis of attendance data have resulted in a significant increase in student attendance, from 81.3% last year to 89.79% to date. Analysis of school-wide behaviors information correctly informed the introduction of a positive behavior intervention supports system, with consequent pleasing reduction in unhelpful behaviors. Through regular meetings, staff and administrators maintain an overview of progress for individuals and groups with regard to individual education plan goals, life skills and other content areas. However, as the school does not have a comprehensive system to synthesize and manipulate all available data at a single point with access for staff and families, analysis is not efficient.

Leaders and teachers rightly work to share information with students and parents as part of the open and accountable culture. The new telephone messenger system helpfully delivers information in home languages. Parents receive weekly behavior "PS721 WORKS" point sheets. Teachers use parent communication books with sensitivity to students' developmental stage. The parent coordinator and transition linkage coordinator rightly act as conduits for information. As a result, the school now has 100% compliance with immunization. Increasing numbers of students participate in travel training as staff allay parental concerns successfully.

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.

Leaders ensure accountability by providing a valuable calendar for all staff including assessment times and meetings dates. In this way, weekly cohort meetings, covering academic and life skills for service categories see class teachers, cluster teachers and related service providers planning and revising goals together. These new meetings also devise thematic goals delivered through all core areas. Functional behavior analyses lead to specific individual behavior plans. Staff revisit individual education plan goals daily through the student portfolio, as a correct basis for instructional planning. The Comprehensive Educational Plan similarly derives from students’ needs. Through active parent and student involvement, including examination of the Learning Environment Survey and the previous Quality Review, the school leadership team devises the school priorities for the year. By conducting a Purpose of Performance Assessment in Schools System wide (PASS) review, members make informed contributions. Leaders and the school leadership team regularly revisit these suitable goals throughout the year. However, in common with goals across the school, outcomes do not always reference impact on student progress. Similarly, as goals do not detail precise interim indicators, this informal monitoring is not robust.

Teachers formally report to parents three times a year, with an additional informal summer school report for twelve month schooling. Regular and frequent communication through parent-teacher association meetings, workshops, conferences and other means enables parents to understand the school’s high expectations for students’ academic and social success. Efforts to strengthen parental involvement in the school’s daily life show pleasing results. One parent’s positive comment summarized for many the renewed sense of purpose and open access, saying, “I see a lot of things in store. I’m glad to be part of it and I’m glad my son’s here.” Celebrations, events and display serve as fine examples for students. They understand the rules, routines and consequences and that staff expect them to work hard. Displays of student work rightly reference State standards. The students’ performance of “The Wizard of Oz” during the Quality Review demonstrated their talent, sense of rhythm, timing, and ability to learn words and cooperate, on a par with or exceeding general education peers. Transition planning, inclusion and work placements serve as powerful incentives and motivating factors. However, not all parents and students clearly understand short-term goals or learning steps, or how to reinforce these at home. The quality of information they receive through written feedback on work, homework sheets and communication books, varies. Worksite evaluation sheets for example, exemplify student self-assessment and so ownership of learning, which is in development in other areas.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

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

The thematic standards based curriculum serves students well. Carefully tailored to student service category needs, it integrates vocational, life skills and academic conceptual understanding. Useful practical opportunities, in-house and in the community, help students to generalize skills, socialize and become independent. With

the integration of related service provision and the arts, students make good progress academically, socially and emotionally. As a result, they move to less restrictive environments, become travel trained and take part in work programs.

Staff organize classrooms to support learning, making best use of available space, at the main site and in the inclusion setting. Teachers and paraprofessionals adapt the curriculum and differentiate instruction and tasks. They rise to the challenge presented by significant changes in students' service category numbers admirably. Harnessing suitable methodologies, aids and communication devices means that all students have equal access to the curriculum. However, some lessons miss opportunities to extend student learning through effective questioning, careful timing and tasks that challenge each student at their level. Classes offer opportunities for collaboration and active learning, but instructions are not always sufficiently clear to maximize engagement and learning.

The evident high levels of respect and trust that abound in the school mean that students feel safe to take risks as learners and self-advocate, exemplified in the expanded student council voice. Students show pride in themselves and their efforts, knowing they are valued as individuals and contribute the school and wider community. Significant improvements in positive behaviors result from the school-wide behavior plan. Strategic budgeting and organizational decisions fully support improved student outcomes, such as in the technology upgrades and whole school staff training to ensure consistent approaches.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The new principal has introduced the *Professional Teaching Standards* so faculty has a shared language in professional reflection. One teacher commented that the changes this year have been "eye opening", while another reflected that they have "improved the quality of instruction and accountability." Teachers have devised professional goals, assisted by the evidence from valuable observations and walkthroughs. However, professional goals are at an early stage in sophistication. Ongoing discussions mean that leaders know staff strengths and work to harness these and build capacity. For example, the inclusion teacher at the high school site was a paraprofessional. Team and cohort meetings rightly include related service providers. The inquiry team's valuable work to increase communication skills shows universal application, with inbuilt informal professional development for other staff. Last year's work informed the move to group students more homogeneously, guided by reading levels. Newly introduced cohort meetings see the mutually supportive staff share ideas and expertise with enhanced accountability. Leaders encourage professional development related to students' needs and so appointed a coach for the teachers who work with the bi-lingual population. Teachers new to the 6:1:1 program benefit from training in the Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children (TEACCH) methodology. The support received from the school-based coach improves teachers' skills, knowledge and repertoire of strategies. District 75 coaches also make useful professional contributions.

The school enjoys productive relationships with inclusion and work sites. Many significant agencies support families with their particular needs, such as Gateway and Human First. The school successfully facilitates parents establishing support networks,

including for siblings. Because of school outreach and agency action, this year's graduates all have Medicaid and suitable transition choices. Students benefit from Project Arts initiatives, clubs and after-school programs. In this way, comprehensive support in school, and through transition, means that students make significant personal and academic growth.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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.

Leaders incorporate regular reviews of performance and progress in all aspects of the school's work. Accordingly, they use monthly cabinet and faculty meetings to monitor goals. Weekly cohort meetings of instructional teams rightly use student portfolios to examine individual mastery, instigate timely interventions and change goals as required. In addition, informal conversations, observations and exchange of information with parents, maintain focus on students' skills acquisition and incremental growth, socially and academically. Unit coordinators, coaches and related service providers form an integral part of this monitoring process. However, there is insufficient formalization of monitoring, as goals do not identify measurable indicators of progress. Similarly, because the analysis of classroom-generated data at the whole school level is informal, strategic planning, though relevant to student needs, does not always derive from formal, detailed analysis.

Understanding the requirements for the many medically fragile students in the school, the principal correctly established a second medical room. With a continual eye to safety of the school community, leaders have effectively sharpened dismissal arrangements. This includes a system of accountability with associated training for all staff, including those on buses. Similarly, training in therapeutic crisis intervention for related service providers, paraprofessionals and faculty is underway to provide continuity for students throughout the organization.

The advent of the new principal has provided an opportunity for the school to turn a critical lens on itself. Mindful that students are typical teenagers, the principal shows a passion to provide the best for her students, with the determination to effect necessary changes to improve outcomes. She benefits from a community that welcomes her new vision, eye for detail and drive. With firm plans to expand the scope of provision for students, move them to less restrictive environments and employability, the vision enjoys the support of students, parents and staff. As one parent said, "She's a staunch supporter of the kids. That's what's going to make the difference."

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Queens Occupational Training Center	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
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.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

To what extent do ...	△	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?				X
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				
				X

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent do school leaders...	△	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X	
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X	
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X	
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				
			X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 ...	△	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X	
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X	
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X	
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				
			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key

△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed
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