

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

Queens Preparatory Academy

High School 248

**143 – 10 Springfield Boulevard
Queens
NY 11413**

Principal: Tashon Haywood

Dates of review: December 8 - 9, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Mick Megee

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Queens Preparatory Academy is a high school with 268 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 85% Black, 8% Hispanic, 1% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 2% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 85.5%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

This small school is improving its expertise in gathering, using and reviewing data. There is effective use of data in English language arts, math, science and social studies, but it is not as effective in other content areas, particularly in the arts and physical education. The school uses data well in order to develop effective programs for special education students and those who are struggling. There is some analysis of the performance of student subgroups, but the school is not making completely effective use of this information when planning instruction or reviewing and setting goals. This means that it may be overlooking significant reasons why some students continue to fail.

The administrators provide all teachers with a regular and accurate critique of their classroom practice and there is good support from all the teachers to those who are new to the school or new to the profession. Because of this, new teachers rapidly increase their skills. Some teachers are very skilful at differentiating their lessons taking full account of the wide range of needs and levels of achievement within their classes. Other teachers are not yet so skilful. The school is providing professional advice and development opportunities to narrow the gap between the less skilled and the best practitioners.

Although some staff are effectively setting learning goals for students, others are not yet fully adept at setting goals which are sufficiently specific and which build upon the students' previous performance. Where goals are insufficiently precise, it is harder for the school, students and their families to make judgements about how much progress has been made and whether there is still more to do. Despite this, families feel that the school does a good job in keeping them informed and there is a good partnership with the home that is well focused on supporting the students. The school has successfully raised parents' expectations of what their children could achieve. They are pleased that where the school identifies that students are doing less well than expected, it responds imaginatively with good results.

There are good relationships between staff and students. Students say they trust and respect their teachers and would turn to them if they were in trouble. The principal has a clear vision and mission. She and the staff are firmly committed to the same set of core values, and this provides a consistent, caring approach to all the students.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- There are good relationships between the school and the students' families, enabling administrators and faculty to effectively convey high expectations of success.
- A good array of student services supports students who are struggling and special education students.
- The principal leads by example and continually demonstrates her commitment to doing the very best for the students and their families.
- School leaders respond effectively and flexibly to any identified underachievement.
- Staff and students know each other well, and enjoy mutual respect and trust in this small school environment.
- There is good collection, analysis, utilization and review of data in English language arts, math science and social studies.

What the school needs to improve

- Make more effective use of data to ensure that all lesson activities match the full range of student achievement and needs in each class.
- Make more effective use of student subgroup information when planning instruction or setting and reviewing individual and group goals.
- Ensure that all learning goals are measurable, specific and firmly based on prior performance and that all students and their families know them.
- Ensure that there is good data collection, analysis, utilization and evaluation across all content areas.

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.

The school has had a focus this year on collecting and analyzing information on the achievement of students in English language arts, math, science and social studies, and this has resulted in effective work in these content areas. The administrators, department and grade team leaders regularly assess summative data such as scholarship grades and earned credits. Based on this information, the school has made effective organizational decisions that have improved the outcomes for struggling students, such as the introduction of 9th grade collaborative team teaching. The school does not yet collect and analyze fully its information in other content areas such as the arts and physical education.

The school has provided some good professional development this year on identifying specific learner-centered problems. Consequently, teachers are becoming increasingly proficient at utilizing the information they have on students' strengths and weaknesses, such as by researching and implementing best practices and effective instructional tools. The school has only recently begun this work, but the early signs are that this focus is already having a beneficial effect upon students' performance.

The school is beginning to pay attention to the importance of analyzing its information on student subgroups. For example, it has recognized and dealt successfully with underachievement by a group of students in collaborative classes. However, the school does not yet routinely collect information about all student subgroups and this means that the school does not yet have the complete picture of why some students are doing less well than expected. The school is making slower progress than it would like in utilizing data to drive instruction because teachers in some departments have not yet had the requisite training and do not have easy access to computers.

Six times a year, every student attends an advisory conference to determine their progress and agree strategies to overcome any problems, including attendance, that the student may be having. The school keeps the parents well informed about the discussions through report cards so that they can better support their children's learning at home.

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.

There is good collaboration between all the groups of staff to discuss the contents of the Comprehensive Education Plan. The staff meet together regularly to evaluate the progress that the school has made during the course of the year, and to develop an action plan for the following year. The school effectively uses content area and grade teams in order to bring staff together to set goals for their department or grade, particularly in English language arts, math, science and social studies.

Although there are many examples of skilful goal setting, the school is not yet completely effective in this area. Following advisories, students and their parents cannot always say precisely what their short-term goals are, because the goals are not always sufficiently specific. There are some good examples of staff teams devising useful strategies that are time-related and designed to bear down upon identified achievement. However, in some cases, for example for some student subgroups, there are no other measurable criteria by which the school can easily measure success. The school does not always ensure that future goals are based on information about past achievement. This means that the goals may be unrealistically high or too easy to reach. Where there is a lack of credible, reportable goals, this makes it harder for the families, school, team or individual to know how much improvement has been made and whether it has been enough.

Although teachers do not always make short-term goals explicit, generally the school conveys high expectations to families and to students, through the advisory structures and through written reports of progress. This gives the students the encouragement they need to reach even higher levels of achievement and to make even faster progress. Parents demonstrate their increasing expectations for example by the way they are asking for more challenging programs for high performing students. One parent said, “If there’s one thing the school could do better, it’s that when children are doing well, they should be pushed on a bit further.” The school makes parents feel that there is a good partnership with the school. They are invited into classrooms to observe the teaching and to make recommendations for improvement. There is a two-weekly report about attendance sent home, so that parents know very quickly if they need to deal with any emergent problem.

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 proficient.

The school offers a curriculum that satisfactorily meets the needs of the students, although budget restrictions and other circumstances outside of the school’s control mean that it is not yet as broad as everyone would like. All the grade teams organize popular interdisciplinary educational visits, but students would like to have more clubs and a wider range of electives. Staffing problems have curtailed the physical education program and students and parents justifiably wish to have this restored as soon as possible. The school meets the minimum requirements for its music programs but

students and parents would like to see more music available on the schedules. Curriculum resources in some content areas, such as calculators and living environment supplies, are in short supply and this hampers both instruction and achievement.

There are some examples of very skilled differentiation within lessons. However, there are lessons in which the activities and strategies deployed are not precisely matched to the different achievement levels or needs of the students. The high performing students may have work that is too easy and they finish quickly. Low performing students may find the level of work above them, and become disillusioned. The school recognizes this as an area for development, and is making it a focus for its lesson observations and professional development.

Staff and students enjoy a good relationship with one another. Students like the small school environment and they say the advisories greatly help cement these relationships. Students say they would like the advisories to be even longer so that there would be even more time to discuss important personal issues. There is a good deal of mutual trust and respect because everyone knows each other very well and there is sufficient time to discuss any difficulties that may arise.

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.

Teachers find the lesson observations by the administrators helpful in improving their instructional practice. Teachers receive written feedback following both formal and informal observations, which contains good recommendations that assist their development. Teachers who are new to the school or to the profession experience good support, particularly from their colleagues who freely give their time to offer encouragement and guidance. There is a wide range of professional development opportunities available to teachers, both in-house including intervisitations and from external sources. Not all teachers feel that the administrators sufficiently differentiate the in-house professional development program so that it accurately matches the needs of each individual teacher. The principal recognizes this difficulty and has put in place arrangements for individual performance planning in order to make clear the individual requirements of each teacher, and to set individual goals for improvement.

The principal has instituted good organizational structures, such as vertical teams (covering each content area) and advisories, which aim to stimulate collaboration and discussion. The school encourages staff to join the inquiry team, which is providing a successful model to the teams in how they can adopt an action research approach to identify and remedy any underachievement that they find. The inquiry team has demonstrated its credibility by drastically improving the performance of grade 11 students in global history. Vertical teams are now planning to have their own inquiry teams to improve the performance of students within their own content area.

The student support programs and services effectively bring back on track those who are struggling. The advisories play an important part in this area, because during these meetings, teachers quickly identify students who are in need of support and can plan remedial strategies. There is good support available to special education students and to English language learners through specialist staff.

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.

There are well-organized procedures and structures in place that allow monitoring and evaluating of progress and student achievement. These procedures and structures include regular opportunities for benchmarking and interim checks. Vertical and grade teams and administrators meet frequently to discuss whether the school is on track and which students, grades or content areas are doing less well than expected. Where goals are sufficiently specific, for example in English language arts, math, science and social studies, interim and final reviews of progress are effective. Elsewhere, particularly for student subgroups as well in the arts and physical education, there is insufficient information for the school to easily review what progress has been made and whether it is sufficient.

The school responds flexibly and adaptively when underachievement is identified. For example, an examination of scholarship reports and Regents grades resulted in the decision to use its Contract for Excellence funds to create smaller classes. When red flags appear, the school organizes scholarship conferences with individual teachers.

The principal's leadership is principled, and full of conviction. She is very ambitious for her students. She leads from the front providing a model of excellence, for example by teaching her own class and welcoming other teachers to observe her practice. The school has recently appointed new administrators, who are still finding their feet. Some teachers feel that there is now less camaraderie between faculty and administrators. Nevertheless, all teachers and administrators demonstrate daily that they share the same passion for doing the very best for the students.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Queens Preparatory Academy	△	➤	✓	+
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.							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
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.							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
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.							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
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