

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

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| <b>DBN:</b>                           | 25Q540  |
| <b>District Name:</b>                 | District 25   |
| <b>School Name:</b>                   | Queens Academy High School  |
| <b>School Addresses:</b>              | 138-11 35 <sup>th</sup> Avenue, Flushing, NY 11354 and<br>142-10 Linden Blvd., Jamaica, NY 11436  |
| <b>Principal:</b>                     | Beverly Short   |
| <b>Accountability Phase/Category:</b> | Improvement (year-1) - Comprehensive  |
| <b>Areas of Identification:</b>       | English Language Arts – All Students; Hispanics; and<br>Economically Disadvantaged<br>Mathematics – All Students; Blacks; Hispanics; and<br>Economically Disadvantaged<br>Graduation Rate |
| <b>Dates of On-site Review:</b>       | February 28 – 29, 2012  |

**PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT**

“Queens Academy’s mission is to provide a respectful, nurturing environment of high learning expectations where students, parents and the academic community assume collective responsibility for all outcomes.”

**PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS**

- The facilities are well kept and welcoming at both campuses. Parents and students indicate that the school is a supportive, family-like environment and positive alternative setting.
- Staff is sensitive to the needs of students and shows a willingness to support a culture that will try different initiatives to benefit students and increase student academic performance.
- Students are respectful of their teachers and fellow students.

## **PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA**

#### **FINDINGS:**

- Students are provided detailed letters outlining areas where remediation is needed based on the analysis and interpretation of Regents examination; however, there is limited evidence these results are shared with parents.
- There is limited evidence that data is analyzed, interpreted and strategically used to determine specific learning needs for all subgroups, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs).
- There is evidence that interim assessments are conducted twice per trimester (six times per year). However, there is limited evidence that the results from these assessments are used to make changes or improvements in the instructional programs for individual students.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The school leader should ensure that the information gathered from the analysis and interpretation of the Regents examinations are shared with support staff, students, and parents and used to set goals and next steps for student achievement. In addition, the school leader should ensure parents receive regular updates and have access to their child's performance and progress.
- The school should conduct a thorough subgroup analysis to determine the causal factors for underperformance and create a strategic instructional plan based on data to address those areas. These data should be reviewed throughout the year and by cohort in order to adjust instructional needs.
- The school should continue to conduct interim assessment analysis delineating the error and distracter analyses of the assessment data. The school leaders should develop, implement, and monitor action plans to instructionally address the learning priorities of individual students based on this analysis.

### **II. TEACHING AND LEARNING**

#### **FINDINGS:**

- There is a schoolwide emphasis on writing across the curriculum. However, there is limited evidence students conduct in-depth research and write papers which would also assist in preparation for post-secondary education.
- In some classes observed by the review team, students were grouped in clusters. However, the grouping was not always purposeful or differentiated.

- In classes observed by the review team, the application of higher order thinking skills through questioning techniques and differentiated student tasks was inconsistent. Students were predominantly asked recall and comprehension questions.
- SMART Boards are widely available in the classes observed; however, the majority of the SMART Boards were not optimally used.
- Although some teachers are using technology to support instruction, not all teachers are able to seamlessly integrate technology into their daily lessons.
- The school offers Academic Intervention Services (AIS) during first period. There were no students present in a number of observed classes and, where students were present, only two or three students were in attendance. Interviews revealed that AIS is offered as an option for students and is not part of their regular program.
- Although lesson plans cited self-reflection and assessment, it was infrequently implemented or observed in classrooms.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The school leadership should encourage teachers to provide opportunities in the writing curriculum for students to complete research papers and projects in preparation for post-secondary education.
- The school leadership should monitor teachers' planning and instructional practice in the classroom to ensure that grouping for instruction is designed to meet the needs of the various learning styles of the students. Students should be provided with tasks and activities that address their specific learning needs.
- Teachers should be provided with support, guidance, and, where appropriate, professional development (PD) to plan and implement lessons that are rigorous. Lessons should contain questions that promote critical thinking and require students to support answers by citing text, elaborating on the answers of other students, and summarizing and rephrasing new information to demonstrate comprehension. Teachers should use wait time, random selection and encourage students to answer in complete sentences. Teachers should provide challenging learning opportunities for all students with particular attention to the needs of the identified subgroups.
- The school should provide teachers with on-going PD to incorporate SMART Board use into their lesson plans to support interactive and hands-on learning.
- The school should encourage inter-visitation within the school and to other schools to expand the use of technology in the classroom. School leaders should develop a comprehensive technology plan, which integrates technology into the curriculum. In addition, the school leadership should provide training and support to teachers to ensure that they have the skills and competencies to effectively use technology, including laptop computers, to support and enhance instruction. School leaders should ensure that strategies learned in PD are routinely integrated into teaching and learning.

- The school should consider scheduling the AIS program into the regular school day to ensure that targeted students receive needed academic intervention services and do not perceive AIS as an optional program. Within the AIS plan, there should be a process for students to demonstrate proficiency in a subject/skill and to exit AIS when no longer needed. School leaders should closely monitor the AIS program for attendance and improved academic performance.
- Student tasks should contain opportunities for assessment and self-reflection. Teachers should implement these elements within lesson delivery to monitor student learning and progress.

### **III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

#### **FINDINGS:**

- Although there is a comprehensive formal observation schedule and teachers have been regularly observed, there was limited evidence that the observations reference individual teachers' PD plans.
- The school has instituted a number of new initiatives which include piloting a trimester schedule, a make-up work pilot, guidance group for ELLs and students with disabilities, and an expansion of the common planning program. However, there was limited evidence of a strategic plan to assess the effectiveness of these initiatives.
- Interviews and review of documents revealed that the school does not consistently distribute notifications to parents in their native language.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The school leader should ensure that recommendations for improvement within teacher observations are aligned with specific PD opportunities and consistent with teachers' professional goals. School leaders should conduct follow-up observations in a timely manner to ensure that recommendations are being implemented.
- The school should implement a system, as part of a continuous improvement plan, to assess the effectiveness of initiatives and make modifications via data-driven, collaborative, instructional planning and continuous monitoring of progress for all students and subgroups. Benchmarks for progress, with specific timeframes to adjust practice during the school year, should be defined in advance.
- The school leader should utilize the translation resources available through the Department of Education (DOE) to ensure that all documents are made available to all parents in their native language.

#### **IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS**

##### **FINDINGS:**

- There is no community-based organization (CBO) on site to support the health, social, and emotional well-being of students and families.
- It was observed by the review team that the lateness policy is inconsistently implemented in classrooms. Some late students signed into class while others were visually acknowledged by the teacher.
- In many of the classes observed by the review team, over 50 percent of the students were absent.
- The staff supports a policy of responding to student's needs when the students seek assistance. However, there was limited evidence that all "at risk" students are seen on a regular basis, limiting impact on those students that do not initiate a conference. There were limited opportunities for guidance staff at both sites to share successful plans and strategies because there was no structured common planning time.
- Orientation for incoming students is done individually, and follow up throughout the year is informal.
- Parents interviewed indicated that there is a potential barrier to parent involvement at the Jamaica site because the school occupies the fourth floor of the building and the elevator is not consistently manned to ensure accessibility for parents with limited mobility.

##### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The school leadership should seek to partner with CBOs to provide on-site services to meet the multiple needs of students and their families. The school should partner with CBOs that can provide the services of a social worker; access to childcare; opportunities for post-secondary readiness, including job opportunities; as well as, a variety of other services to the school community.
- The school leader should implement a uniform schoolwide system and policy where student lateness is consistently recorded and entered into Automate the Schools (ATS). This will allow both school leaders and the guidance counselors to analyze patterns of student behavior and develop intervention systems to decrease the lateness to class.
- The school leaders should re-examine outreach efforts and seek assistance from the Network to identify strategies for improving attendance that have proven successful in similar schools. In addition, the school leader should work with all stakeholders, i.e., the attendance teacher, parent coordinator, parents, school counselors and assistant principals, to develop and implement strategies to improve attendance.
- School leaders should ensure that the guidance staff keeps a log of their activities that is reviewed regularly to ensure that an adequate amount of time is provided for outreach for all "at risk" students in support of college and career readiness. In addition, school leaders should review the

school's schedule to ensure that common planning time is provided for guidance staff from both sites to meet regularly to exchange best practices.

- The school leadership should ensure that the guidance counselors provide formal orientation meetings for incoming students. These meetings should address specific social and academic needs that have been identified through an analysis of data.
- The school leaders should develop a plan to ensure the elevator is available to parents. A staff member should be available to operate the elevator and ensure access to the school for all parents and guardians.

## **V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **FINDINGS:**

- Teachers are provided with and select from a survey of PD offerings. However, staff interviewed indicated there was no specific PD to address the instructional needs of teachers within the content areas.
- There is limited evidence that the PD plan was aligned to the areas of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) identification in the Accountability Overview Report (AOR) to ensure that teachers are provided with the necessary instructional supports to address the areas of need for the identified student subgroups in ELA and mathematics.
- There is evidence that feedback forms were collected at PD sessions; however, there was limited evidence that adjustments were made to PD offerings based on the feedback from teachers.
- There is limited evidence that school leaders check for implementation of initiatives or training acquired through PD in their classroom observations and walkthroughs.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The school leader should develop and implement a PD plan designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning, ensure that teachers participate in PD within their content area in order to remain current with their profession, and meet the learning needs of their students. The PD plan should be aligned with the school's CEP goals and should take into account the differentiated needs of the staff and students.
- The school leaders should ensure that the PD plan is aligned to the areas of NCLB identification in the AOR. This would ensure that teaching and learning goals are targeted to the individualized needs of the identified student subgroups.
- School leaders should analyze feedback forms to align the PD offerings to the professional goals and needs of the teachers. The individual teacher goals should align with the CEP goals and be in accordance with the school's mission.

- School leaders should conduct observations following PD sessions to ensure the strategies learned are incorporated into classroom instructional practices. Observations should focus on the skills and strategies learned during PD and provide specific next steps that will be the focus of subsequent observations.

## **VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES**

### **FINDINGS:**

- Although textbooks were available, they were seldom used as a reference source in the classes observed. Handouts were primarily used in most classrooms.
- There is no school library available in either campus.
- At the Jamaica campus, there is one dedicated laboratory that is shared by both Queens Academy HS and another school within the building. Classes are not regularly scheduled to use the laboratory.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Teachers should use textbooks as appropriate to support learning. Textbooks, when available, should serve as an entry point to learning and be used along with technology, trade books and multi-media materials that are differentiated to address both student interest and need.
- The school should expand classroom libraries to encourage students to borrow and read books on a regular basis. The administration should work with the New York Public Library to ensure that students have library cards. School leaders should schedule field trips and workshops with the local branch of the library as part of the orientation program for incoming students.
- The programmer should schedule classes for regular use of the laboratory facilities to support hands-on inquiry based lessons.

## **PART 4: CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

Queens Academy High School was well prepared for the SQR visit. The administrative team and staff were available and supportive throughout the review. They are commended for their preparation and support.

As a transfer school, Queens Academy High School is faced with many unique challenges based on the high number of over-aged and under-credited students that are admitted. The school has implemented a number of initiatives during the current school year to enhance their efforts in meeting the needs of their students. As part of their improvement efforts, the school leadership should evaluate these initiatives to determine if their expectations are being met and modify initiatives and activities if necessary. Two areas that can boost the school's improvement efforts are attendance and parental

involvement. The school leadership should seek outside partnerships to assist them to advance their efforts in these two areas.

The findings and recommendations noted in the report are intended to guide the school's inquiry, planning, and the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) for school year 2012-13. The school should also continue its efforts in the implementation of the following Regents Reform Agenda initiatives: P-12 Common Core Learning Standards, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teacher effectiveness.