

Key Characteristics

School Organization and Structure

Q2L's student population is integrated and diverse. An emphasis in recruiting students is placed on reflecting not only race, but gender, ethnicity, and the attendance area's socioeconomic and academic levels. Attention is also paid to the inclusion of special-education and English-language learners.

Integrated Domains

The Integrated Domains that make up Q2L offer the primary learning contexts for students. Through the structure of Discovery Missions and the culminating Boss Levels, students are provided with rich, integrated contexts in which to practice with a range of ways of knowing, informed by the school's foundation in math and writing as well as state standards. In the sixth grade, each domain class meets a minimum of three times each week.

Choice (XPods)

Q2L teachers are hired in part because they bring a set of passions and interests to bear on the curriculum. Choice courses

are electives created by faculty around topics that support these passions and interests. They allow for smaller class sizes because all teachers in a grade are teaching at the same time. This structure also allows teachers to coteach a larger group of students, to collaborate on a topic, or to do explorations around particular tools or technologies. Choice courses run for six weeks, two Choice sessions per semester. In the sixth grade, Choice classes meet four times each week.

Here are some sample Choice classes:

- Mr. Smiley is a devoted chef and wants to have the students explore cooking. He develops a course where students are challenged to develop menus for the rest of the school based on locally grown food. The students have first to gain an understanding of where the food comes from and make decisions about what can be on the menu at what part of the year. During the last two weeks of the course, students create lunch for the entire school, applying math and science concepts.
- Mrs. Shapiro is a ham radio hobbyist and develops a course to teach students how to run their own ham radio station. She shares students with Miss Torres, who is running a Choice class called “The Wireless Imagination.” Students learn how to build pirate radios from found materials, focusing on understanding how electricity and circuits work.
- Mr. Chau is an avid *Dungeons and Dragons* player. He is running a Choice class in *D&D* focusing on methods for calculating probability and the design of narrative scenarios.

Specials

Teachers meet for one hour every day for planning, except for Wednesdays, when they have an additional three hours. During

these periods, students take “Specials”: elective classes taught by school partner groups. Specials are opportunities for students to do work in specific areas of curricular interest—Lego Robotics League, Anime Book Club, Civilization League, Spoken Word, and so on— or for one-on-one tutoring of students who may want or need extra help in reading or numeracy. Because we are envisioning the school as a research and demonstration site, Specials play a significant role in creating contexts for research partnerships with universities, corporations, and nonprofits as well as in establishing a context for student internships.

The Mission Annex

Teachers plan and implement a numeracy and literacy-focused enrichment period for students three times each week. The purpose of the Mission Annex is to provide students with a practice and “tinkering” space around key math and ELA concepts related to a domain’s Discovery Mission. This period can be used to support students struggling in particular areas of a Mission or to provide extended opportunities for students who are meeting current Mission requirements.

Student Advisory Groups: Home Base

The advisory period—called Home Base—is critical to the development of the culture of success and safety within the school. During this period, held both at the start and at the end of the school day, students have the opportunity to develop a close relationship with a trusted adult who will help create an environment where the student’s voice can be heard. The same adult will remain consistently in this position across the seven years of the students’ school experience and will know the

student and his or her family well in order to maximize the support provided for student learning and growth. This program is structured around the development of students' academic, personal, and community "voice." Students use Home Base to reflect and plan with their advisers for their continual success.

Professional-development (PD) structures are in place to support teachers in doing advisory, and at the beginning of the year all teachers take part in a workshop focused on student advisories. Goals for the advisory groups include:

- Creating a practice space for community development
- Building deep relationships of trust and mentorship between students and dedicated adults
- Offering a structured time to discuss school issues
- Offering readiness and preparation time: "How ready are we to be good learners?"
- Focusing on disposition development;
- Highlighting and praising student achievements and goals.

Structure of the Day/Week

School begins at 8:00 a.m. and ends for students at 4:10 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. On Wednesdays, the day ends for students at 2:00 p.m. to provide PD time for teachers. All students in grades 6 through 12 use the same schedule to enable course acceleration across grade levels. Once the upper school opens, coordination with local colleges and universities will take place to allow students to access college-level courses as part of their class schedules.

The schedule is organized into A, B, and C schedules. Context and Choice classes are will be 80 minutes in length, and Spe-

cial are 60 minutes, with 5 minutes allotted for passing between classes.

Schedules A and B: Discovery Missions

Schedules A and B run for 10 weeks each semester. Students follow schedule A on Mondays and Tuesdays and Schedule B on Thursdays and Fridays. Students meet until 2:00 p.m. only on Wednesdays and take elective courses called Choice. During schedules A and B, students are immersed in Discovery Missions delivered within the contexts of the Integrated Domains (The Way Things Work; Sports for the Mind; Being, Space, and Place; Codeworlds; and Wellness.)

Schedule C: Boss Levels

Schedule C runs during the last two weeks of a semester and provides a two-week “intensive” known as a Boss Level, where students and teachers work collaboratively on a capstone project. This project represents a space of defense of skills and competencies acquired during the previous 10 weeks. During a Boss Level, students participate in a rigorous process of research, theory building, hypothesis testing, evaluation, and critique—all followed by a public defense of results. Student-led teacher conferences take place at the end of the capstone project, allowing students, teachers, and parents/caregivers to review student achievement and progress together. Students also work within the Wellness learning context three days a week during schedule C.

During Boss Levels, the Sports for the Mind teacher coordinates teaching and learning efforts. The other teachers take on roles as team leaders for groups of students (approximately

12 students per section). Students are assigned to sections and work with each other in that section to complete the Boss Level challenge. During Boss Levels, students have the opportunity to take on assigned roles—producer, engineer, site planner, ethnographer, writer, and so on, depending on the nature of the challenge. Assigning roles allows students to gain practice with different aspects of working in specialized teams and provides the teacher with clear contexts for assessment.

Sixth-Grade Sample Student Schedules

Schedules A and B (Weeks 1–10 of a Trimester)

Box 3

Time	Monday/ Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday/Friday
8:00–9:05 a.m.	Morning Lab	Morning Lab	Morning Lab
9:10–9:25 a.m.	Morning meeting	Morning meeting	Morning meeting
9:30–9:45 a.m.	Home Base Advisory	Home Base Advisory	Home Base Advisory
9:50–11:10 a.m.	The Way Things Work (math/science)	Codeworlds (math/ELA)	Codeworlds (math/ELA)
11:15 a.m.–12:35 p.m.	Being, Space, and Place (social studies/ELA)	XPods	Sports for the Mind (game design/digital literacy)
12:40–1:20 p.m.	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:25–2:25 p.m.	SPECIAL	1:25–2:00 p.m. Home Base Advisory	SPECIAL

Box 3

(continued)

Time	Monday/ Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday/Friday
2:30–3:50 p.m.	Being, Space, and Place (social studies/ ELA)	(early dismissal)	Wellness (health/ physical education)
3:55–4:10 p.m.	Home Base Advisory		Home Base Advisory
4:15–6:00 p.m.	Afternoon Lab (optional + snack)		Afternoon Lab (optional + snack)

Schedule C (Weeks 11–12 of a Trimester)

Box 4

Time	Monday/ Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday/Friday
8:00–9:05 a.m.	Morning Lab	Morning Lab	Morning Lab
9:10–9:25 a.m.	Morning meeting	Morning meeting	Morning meeting
9:30–9:45 a.m.	Home Base Advisory	Home Base Advisory	Home Base Advisory
9:50–11:10 a.m.	Boss Challenge	Boss Challenge	Boss Challenge
11:15 a.m.–12:35 p.m.	Boss Challenge	Boss Challenge	Boss Challenge
12:40–1:20 p.m.	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:25–2:25 p.m.	SPECIAL	1:25–2:00 p.m. Home Base Advisory	SPECIAL
2:30–3:50 p.m.	Wellness (Mon.)/Boss Challenge (Tues.)	(early dismissal)	Wellness (Thur.)/Boss Challenge (Fri.)

Box 4

(continued)

Time	Monday/ Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday/Friday
3:55pm–4:10	Home Base Advisory		Home Base Advisory
4:15–6:00 p.m.	Afternoon Lab (optional + snack)		Afternoon Lab (optional + snack)

The Boss Challenge component of our curriculum operates as a primary space in which students earn qualification badges as they participate in a rigorous process of research, theory building, hypothesis testing, evaluation, and critique—all followed by a public defense of results.

Eighth-Grade Sample Student Schedule

Schedules A and B (Weeks 1–10 of a Trimester)

Box 5

Time	Monday/ Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday/Friday
8:00–9:05 a.m.	Morning Lab	Morning Lab	Morning Lab
9:10–9:25 a.m.	Morning meet- ing	Morning meet- ing	Morning meeting
9:30–9:45 a.m.	Home Base Advisory	Home Base Advisory	Home Base Advisory
9:50–11:10 a.m.	The Way Things Work (Earth science)	XPods/Intern- ship	Codeworlds (Inte- grated Algebra I)

Box 5

(continued)

Time	Monday/ Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday/Friday
11:15 a.m.– 12:35 p.m.	Sports for the Mind (Build- ing in Virtual Worlds)	XPods/intern- ship	Being, Space, and Place (social stud- ies/ELA)
12:40–1:20 p.m.	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:25–2:25 p.m.	Foreign-Lan- guage Lab	1:25–2:00 p.m. internship	Foreign-Language Lab
2:30–3:50 p.m.	Being, Space, and Place (social studies/ ELA)	(early dismissal)	Wellness (health and physical education)
3:55pm–4:10	Home Base Advisory		Home Base Advisory
4:15–6:00 p.m.	Afternoon Lab (optional + snack)		Afternoon Lab (optional + snack)

Schedule C (Weeks 11–12 of a Trimester)

Box 6

Time	Monday/ Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday/Friday
8:00–9:05 a.m.	Morning Lab	Morning Lab	Morning Lab
9:10–9:25 a.m.	Morning meet- ing	Morning meet- ing	Morning meeting
9:30–9:45 a.m.	Home Base Advisory	Home Base Advisory	Home Base Advisory
9:50–11:10 a.m.	Boss Challenge	Boss Challenge/ Internship	Boss Challenge

Box 6

(continued)

Time	Monday/ Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday/Friday
11:15 a.m.– 12:35 p.m.	Boss Challenge	Boss Challenge /Internship	Boss Challenge
12:40–1:20 p.m.	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:25–2:25 p.m.	SPECIAL	1:25–2:00 p.m. Home Base Advisory/In- ternship	SPECIAL
2:30–3:50 p.m.	Wellness (Mon.)/Boss Challenge (Tues.)	(early dismissal)	Wellness (Thur.)/ Boss Challenge (Fri.)
3:55–4:10 p.m.	Home Base Advisory		Home Base Advisory
4:15–6:00 p.m.	Afternoon Lab (optional + snack)		Afternoon Lab (optional + snack)

Professional Development

Teachers report to school at 8:00 a.m. each day and complete their contractual day at 4:10 p.m. to allow time for preparation and before/after-school tutoring. This extended time gives students greater access to teachers so that they can receive needed individual attention. Teachers have either a professional planning period each day or a team meeting period with their grade-level team or the Institute of Play for common planning time. Teachers have 80 minutes a day on four days a week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday) dedicated to PD; on Wednesdays, teachers meet together for 120 minutes. Finally,

each teacher is expected to dedicate one Saturday morning per month (three hours) to academic support and tutoring of students.

An integrated and well-supported PD plan is a key component of Q2L. Our PD philosophy is based on the school's core values and practices: teachers engage in prototyping and iteration of their teaching methods and curriculum through the following structures:

- *Lesson Study* This collaborative form of PD is based on a convergence of student needs, teacher needs, school needs, and district needs. Largely teacher driven and teacher run, lesson study consists of the study or examination of teaching practice. Through lesson study, teachers engage in a well-defined process that involves discussing lessons that they have first planned and observed together. This process involves hours of discussion, observation, and planning, and it uses video documentation and analysis as a primary tool set.
- *Mission Lab* This site within the school focuses on collaborative curricular work between teachers and game design experts. The Institute of Play, as a formal partner in the school, hosts sessions in game design, systems thinking, and mission planning.
- *Induction Sessions* Teachers entering the school for its opening in fall 2009 attended a series of "induction" sessions prior to the opening of the school, held in late spring and summer. These sessions continued throughout the year as described earlier and will serve as an ongoing induction space for new teachers coming into the school.
- *Outcome Seminar* At the end of each series of Missions and culminating Boss Levels, a seminar is held with teachers and the

advisory board to look at the semester's outcomes. This seminar is moderated by the Institute of Play and serves as a tool for PD as well as a way to maintain the school's vision across a range of stakeholders.

- *Public Sharing* Teachers are encouraged to give papers at conferences and to share their work with other professionals in the field as a way to build, grow, revise, stabilize, expand, and share their approach and methods.
- *Specials Short Course* Instructors for Specials are required to take part in a one-hour short course focusing on the school's values and teaching protocols in order to create consistency for the students across all courses.

Studio Q

Studio Q is integrated and well-supported PD plan and a key component of Q2L. Our PD philosophy is based on the school's core design-based values and practices—teachers will engage in prototyping and iteration of their teaching methods and curriculum on an ongoing basis.

At Q2L, we believe that all teachers, students, parents, and staff members are part of a learning community. Thus, we approach PD from the standpoint that each teacher brings knowledge and experiences that are valuable to the learning community, and we recognize that teachers need to be supported in their growth as teachers and learners.

The term *professional development* is used widely in the education community to refer to any type of activity that is designed to improve teachers' knowledge or skills. In fact, however, it can refer to a vast range of activities from "highly targeted work with teachers around specific curricula and teaching practices to

short, ‘hit-and-run’ workshops” (Elmore 2004, 94–95). At Q2L, we seek to support our teachers in pedagogical growth, but we take a very specific approach to this process. For this reason, we have chosen to call our PD model “Studio Q.”

The foundation of Studio Q rests on a philosophy of how members of a school community can best support its teachers’ effectiveness and sense of satisfaction. Our philosophy is undergirded by current academic literature and research, which has indicated that PD that is *collaborative, school based, focused on student learning, continuous, and embedded in teachers’ daily work* is the most successful in changing teacher practice (Elmore 2004; Sagor 2000) as well as in increasing teacher retention and satisfaction (Berg, Donaldson, and Johnson 2005; Fulton, Yoon, and Lee 2005). In addition, our design takes into account the characteristics that the National Staff Development Council has identified as key components of quality PD:

- Organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school (teams)
- Requires skillful school leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement
- Requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration
- Uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement
- Uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact
- Prepares educators to apply research to decision making
- Uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal
- Applies knowledge about human learning and change

- Provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate
- Prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, to create safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments, and to hold high expectations for students' academic achievement
- Deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately
- Provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately (from the council's Web site at www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm)

Guiding Principles of Studio Q

The Studio Q design team has established a set of principles and questions to guide the planning and implementation of Studio Q at Q2L.

1. Teachers and students should engage in a parallel learning process. Adult functioning must model ideal student functioning.
2. Learning experiences should be
 - immersive;
 - inquiry driven and case based;
 - connected to teachers' daily practice;
 - ongoing, continuous, and purposeful;
 - systems driven;
 - design oriented;
 - engaging and motivating;
 - collaborative to construct communal knowledge;
 - able to capitalize on available digital technologies; and
 - accompanied by constant reflection.

3. There needs to be a careful balance between depth and breadth in terms of the skills, content, and understandings that teachers are expected to learn and enact.
4. The curriculum for teachers should be based on adult learning principles.
5. Teachers need time and space to engage in reflection, dialog, and collaboration. Time must be built into the school schedule for this kind of work.
6. Supervision should be multifaceted and related to Studio Q and should include peer review.

Guiding Questions

1. What does it mean to be a teacher at Q2L?
How do we know what to teach? How do we set clear goals? How do we plan? How do we teach? How do we assess?
2. What does it mean to be a learner at Q2L?
How do we learn about ourselves? How do we learn about our students? How do we act on what we learn? How do we learn how to be more effective learners?
3. What does it mean to be a designer at Q2L?
What does it mean to “design”? What roles do collaboration, reflection, and iteration play in the design process? What does it mean to design gamelike learning experiences?

Six Dimensions of Teacher Development

All of the work in Studio Q is geared toward helping teachers develop the knowledge, skills, and understandings needed to be effective teachers in the Q2L model. We have established six dimensions of teaching and learning that guide the work of Studio Q and the evaluation of our teachers.

1. *Designer* Teachers codesign, implement, and revise gamelike curriculum with game designers and curriculum directors.
2. *Assessor* Teachers design and implement embedded assessment, use data from assessments to evaluate student learning, make adjustments to curriculum based on assessments, and help students set learning goals.
3. *Systems Thinker* Teachers understand the architecture of dynamic systems and are able to think systemically.
4. *Wellness Integrator* Teachers understand the dynamics among their students and between students and other members of the school community. They are able to act on understandings of interpersonal and group dynamics to address students' emotional, academic, physical and nutritional needs.
5. *Technology Integrator* Teachers are able to seek out, identify, and use technology to enhance student learning.
6. *Practitioner* Teachers exhibit exemplary pedagogical practices in areas such as differentiating instruction, integration of content expertise, classroom management, communication with parents, lesson planning, students' engagement in learning, and maintenance of an effective learning environment.

Yearly Goals

At the start of each year, Q2L's directors of curriculum and instruction and executive directors will meet with teachers to go over Studio Q goals. Teachers will then participate in individual meetings where they will determine which goals they would like extra support with for the year. If teachers do not meet their yearly goals, the directors of curriculum and instruc-

tion will make a PD plan with teachers for the following year to help them meet their goals.

The following structures will be used to support teachers in meeting their goals:

1. *Weekly Studio Q Sessions* As teachers move through Studio Q each week, they will be working on developing *artifacts* that show evidence of their movement toward their goals. All of these artifacts are meaningful, relevant, and part of teachers' regular work in Studio Q.
2. *Coaching and Feedback* The directors of curriculum and instruction, the executive directors, coaches/content experts, other teachers, and the Wellness coordinator may visit teachers' classrooms to give feedback regarding their teaching. This feedback is designed to help teachers in meeting the year's Studio Q goals and is not meant to be evaluative. Whenever feedback is given, the "observer" will write up a feedback report. In addition, the directors of curriculum and instruction will serve as mentors for new teachers at Q2L.
3. *Peer Review* Teachers will engage in a peer-review process. This process will provide new teachers at Q2L with peer-level support and will be used to identify teachers' areas of strength and areas that need extra support. After the first initial review, teachers will be reviewed every three years. Teachers who have been reviewed will participate as committee members the following year.
4. *Informal Observations* Administrators may arrange to visit teachers' rooms and observe them teach for short periods of time. The purpose of these informal observations is to give feed-

back to teachers on curriculum and teaching practices in an informal manner. Teachers may request informal observations for feedback in particular areas at any point during the school year. These observations do not go into the teacher's file.

Professional-Development Cycle

- *May 2009* Begin biweekly induction sessions with new Q2L teachers, run by the Institute of Play.
- *August 2009* Three-week Teacher's Institute, to overlap with a two-week student bridge program, allowing teachers to devote part days to working with new students in informal contexts.
- *Fall 2009–Spring 2010* Daily PD sessions and work with Mission Lab.
- *May 2010* Biweekly induction sessions with new Q2L teachers.

Sample Teacher Schedules

Domain: The Way Things Work (Math/Science) Schedule A (Weeks 1–10 of a Trimester)

Box 7

Time	Monday/ Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday/Friday
8:00–9:05 a.m.	Morning Lab	Morning Lab	Morning Lab
9:10–9:25 a.m.	Morning meeting	Morning meeting	Morning meeting
9:30–9:45 a.m.	Home Base Advisory	Home Base Advisory	Home Base Advisory
9:50–11:10 a.m.	The Way Things Work (math/ science)	Prep	Prep

Box 7

(continued)

Time	Monday/ Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday/Friday
11:15 a.m.– 12:35 p.m.	Prep	XPods	The Way Things Work (math/ science)
12:40–1:20 p.m.	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:25–2:25 p.m.	PD/Planning	1:25–2:00 p.m. Home Base Advisory	PD/Planning
2:30–3:50 p.m.	The Way Things Work (math/sci- ence)	PD	Wellness (math/ science theme)
3:55–4:10 p.m.	Home Base Advisory	PD	Home Base Advisory

Schedule C (Weeks 11–12 of a Trimester)

Box 8

Time	Monday/ Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday/Friday
8:00–9:05 a.m.	Morning Lab	Morning Lab	Morning Lab
9:10–9:25 a.m.	Morning meet- ing	Morning meet- ing	Morning meeting
9:30–9:45 a.m.	Home Base Advisory	Home Base Advisory	Home Base Advisory
9:50–11:10 a.m.	Boss Challenge (team teaching)	Boss Challenge (team teaching)	Boss Challenge (team teaching)
11:15 a.m.–12:35 p.m.	Boss Challenge (team teaching)	Prep	Boss Challenge (team teaching)
12:40–1:20 p.m.	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:25–2:25 p.m.	PD/Planning	1:25–2:00 p.m. Home Base Advisory	PD/Planning

Box 8

(continued)

Time	Monday/ Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday/Friday
2:30–3:50 p.m.	Wellness (Mon.)/ Boss Challenge (Tues.)	PD	Wellness (Thur.)/ Boss Challenge (Fri.)
3:55–4:10 p.m.	Home Base Advisory	PD	Home Base Advisory

**Domain: Being, Space, and Place (Social Studies/ELA) Schedule B
(Weeks 1–10 of a Trimester)**

Box 9

Time	Monday/ Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday/Friday
9:10–9:25 a.m.	Morning meet- ing	Morning meet- ing	Morning meeting
9:30–9:45 a.m.	Home Base Advisory	Home Base Advisory	Home Base Advisory
9:50–11:10 a.m.	Prep	XPods	Prep
11:15–12:35 p.m.	Being, Space, and Place (social studies/ ELA)	Prep	Being, Space, and Place (social stud- ies/ELA)
12:40–1:20 p.m.	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:25–2:25 p.m.	PD/Planning	1:25–2:00 p.m. Home Base Advisory	PD/Planning
2:30–3:50 p.m.	Being, Space, and Place (social studies/ ELA)	PD	Wellness (social studies/ELA theme)

Box 9

(continued)

Time	Monday/ Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday/Friday
3:55–4:10 p.m.	Home Base Advisory	PD	Home Base Advisory
4:15–6:00 p.m.	Afternoon Lab		Afternoon Lab

Schedule C (Weeks 11–12 of a Trimester)

Box 10

Time	Monday/ Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday/Friday
9:10–9:25 a.m.	Morning meet- ing	Morning meet- ing	Morning meeting
9:30–9:45 a.m.	Home Base Advisory	Home Base Advisory	Home Base Advisory
9:50–11:10 a.m.	Boss Challenge (team teaching)	Boss Challenge (team teaching)	Boss Challenge (team teaching)
11:15 a.m.– 12:35 p.m.	Boss Challenge (team teaching)	Prep	Boss Challenge (team teaching)
12:40–1:20 p.m.	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:25–2:25 p.m.	PD/Planning	1:25–2:00 p.m. Home Base Advisory	PD/Planning
2:30–3:50 p.m.	Wellness (M)/ Boss Challenge (T)	PD	Wellness (TH)/ Boss Challenge (F)
3:55–4:10 p.m.	Home Base Advisory	PD	Home Base Advisory
4:15–6:00 p.m.	Afternoon LAB		Afternoon LAB

School Calendar and Schedule

The school offers instruction 180 days each year for students. Students coming to the school for the first time participate in a two-week bridge program before they start the school year in order to orient them to the school's thematic and instructional model. The year is organized into three trimesters, each 12 weeks in length.

Class Size and Teacher–Student Loads

Teachers are responsible for knowing well and serving approximately 80 students in the first three years and 100 students thereafter as part of a grade-level team. The decision to start with a smaller student body initially was made to allow for capacity building within this new and highly innovative school model. This team shares these 80–100 students, allowing for consistency of approach, interdisciplinary work, and student accountability for learning across subject areas. The team also targets the needed support services for students and intensive individual and family support for students in need.

In order to maximize the extended learning periods and to offer students deep learning with a great deal of individual attention, average class sizes is targeted at 25 students. Research has shown that this target number allows for the needed differentiation for diversity among students and for the development of a relationship between student and teacher that is central to student success.

Special-education teachers and English-language learner teachers serve as supports for identified students and for all teachers who serve these students' learning needs in both inclusion and pullout settings. These specialized teachers must attend team meetings as needed and meet as a special-needs team to help coordinate intervention strategies for all students. Special-education teachers and English-language learner teachers may at times serve as coteachers within the inclusion classroom settings to provide greater mainstreamed support to students and to model differentiated strategies for mainstreamed classroom teachers.

Teachers also serve as advisers to a smaller group of students (approximately 10 students per group). They are the key advocates for their advisees, supporting them in their educational plans in each year of their attendance at Q2L. Teachers-advisers also serve as the main point of contact for parents or guardians as well as for other teachers who interact with these student and who thus are also providing these students with support and help in problem solving.

Teachers and students are organized into grade-level teams, supporting a culture of collaborative work across disciplines and providing a seamless level of support between students and teachers. Each grade-level team has a grade-level leader who is also a teacher in that grade. In addition, teachers are also members of a knowledge domain cluster guided by one lead teacher. Special-area teachers (e.g., arts, physical education, etc.) also form a specialist cluster led by one teacher. Opportunities exist for cross-team meetings and sharing of ideas as well as cross-grade connections.

Grouping for Instruction

Teachers are grouped in order to maximize the quality of the instructional program while meeting the individual needs of the students both in their classes and in their advisories. Faculty are members of three distinct groups to support their development and the quality of instruction for all students:

Whole Faculty

Because the school is designed as a small school, it is critical that the entire faculty have time to work together to build the culture around the belief system that will help all students reach the outcomes represented in the Student Graduate Profile as outlined in “Quest to Learn Community.” Weekly meetings serve to engage the entire faculty as a unit around the important instructional issues that will accelerate all students’ success.

Grade-Level Teams

As mentioned previously, each faculty member belongs to a grade-level team that is cross disciplinary and is responsible for approximately 80 students. This team meets at least twice weekly to plan together; design interdisciplinary, game-, and systems-based curriculum opportunities for their students; and devise strategies to meet the needs of all the students for whom the team is responsible. Special-area teachers (arts, technology, and physical education) also form appropriate teams and have the opportunity to participate in grade-level teams when staff meetings regarding specific students or student groups are held. Special-needs teachers (special education, English-language

learners) participate in grade-level team meetings on a regular basis.

Learning Context Cluster

Teachers gather at least once a month in discipline-specific groups in order to align curriculum vertically, to align the instruction of context-specific skills and capacities, and to devise strategies to bring game design and systems-based content to their specific context. They also focus on context-based literacy strategies, including identification of domain-based vocabulary and writing structures that will assist all students in successfully accessing each thematic domain. In addition, these groups look at student work, examine teacher assignments, design opportunities for peer visitations, engage in text-based discussions and participate in student shadowing experiences using protocols that can also be used within their classrooms in order to engage students actively around the work.

Student Grouping

Students are grouped to maximize their learning within classrooms. To this end, whenever possible, classrooms are heterogeneous in nature. Within each classroom, students have multiple opportunities to work in cooperative groups that are flexible and designed to support accomplishment of the tasks at hand. When needed, students may be placed in flexible, short-term skills groups within the classroom in order to receive extra attention around a particular area of learning.

The goal is to maximize a student's experiences by making the necessary accommodations that will assist the student in

accessing the rigorous, developmentally appropriate content of the classroom. Accommodations may include but are not limited to extra time, personnel that follow students into the classroom, adjusted assignments, extended timelines, technological support services, and so on.

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Quest to Learn

Developing the School for Digital Kids

By: Katie Salen Tekinbaş, Robert Torres, Loretta Wolozin, Rebecca Rufo-Tepper, Arana Shapiro

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Quest to Learn: Developing the School for Digital Kids

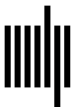
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