



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Young Women's Leadership School of Queens

High School 896

**109 - 120 Union Hall Street
Queens
NY 11433**

Principal: Avionne Gumbs

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Reviewer: Peter Barton

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Young Women's Leadership School of Queens is one of the two single-sex schools in Queens. The Young Women's Leadership Foundation (YWL) has four schools in NYC, including the flagship school in East Harlem. The Queens school was set up to replicate this highly successful school.

The school was established in September 2005 and now has grades 7 and 8 with 155 enrolled students. This school is located mainly on the third floor of PS40Q and the students are made up of approximately: 64% Black, 17% Hispanic and 19% Asian and those from other ethnic backgrounds. Five per cent are special education students and there are no English language learners.

The school schedule is restricted and aligned with PS40Q to share teachers. The school is further challenged by its relative size, per capita funding and maintaining good and positive relationships on a shared site. The current attendance is 95.7% which is above that of City schools.

The core purpose of the YWL Foundation is to partner with school districts, parents and community leaders to create single-sex public schools and college guidance programs. The Foundation states, 'we are in the business of raising expectations, improving student performance and inspiring leadership'. All students wear school uniform with 'girls rule' printed on the back of their shirts.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is recognized by the whole school community as a dynamic, enthusiastic leader with a clear vision for the school and its students.
- The school effectively uses external and internal data to track the performance of students to inform instructional programs.
- The school has high aspirations for both academic success and the personal development of all its students and these are shared with parents.
- There is a developing collaborative culture where teachers give freely of their own time to jointly develop pedagogy, advisory and mutual professional development.
- The school is a calm and orderly environment in which learning is the highest priority.
- Relationships between adults and students in the school are really positive with mutual respect on all sides.
- There is effective instructional practice, which both challenges and engages the students.
- The community service and the *CollegeBound* initiatives provide inspirational opportunities for all students to contribute to life outside school and have a 'taste' of college life.
- Professional development programs, including Saturday retreats, are developing well.
- Student attendance is very good.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the analysis of data for easier comparison of performance across grades and classes.
- Goals for individual students, classrooms, grade levels and academic subjects are not specific enough, or time related, to be measurable.
- Goals and plans are not linked at all levels with information from periodic assessments, appropriate cross referencing and agreement with all members of the school community.
- Build on the good practice in collecting and analyzing data to ensure that all teachers are able to access this data in order to evaluate themselves and each other so they can use what is learned to drive improvement.
- Embed practice for evaluating professional development activities to ensure impact.
- Ensure greater consistency in the recording and use of assessment data by teachers at quarterly review to support more effective intervention, and improve students' progress.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The Young Women's Leadership School of Queens is in the early stages of development. The dynamic, enthusiastic principal has been the driving force in creating a school that is orderly and enjoys strong relationships based on mutual respect between principal, staff, students and parents. The principal is an excellent role model in all aspects of her work and is highly regarded. As the school grows, additional senior staff will need to be appointed to more fully support the principal in a cabinet and administration. Data is analyzed carefully to monitor performance and inform instructional practice. There is more work to be done to develop and articulate a vision, create clear, measurable, goals and align them with the data through the frequent intervention and reporting periods that the school already has in place. The students are proud to be at a school which works hard to develop their academic, personal and leadership growth. Staff are enthusiastic and feel privileged to be part of the YWL ethos which creates impetus and drive for all. Mutual respect pervades the corridors and classrooms and parents are committed and supportive.

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

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

The data collected by the school enables it to establish a really clear picture of the overall performance and progress made by its students. Data collection begins during the 'Summer Bridge', a transition summer school before grade 7, which is attended by 70% of eligible students. Informal observations take place during this period. Test results in October enable adjustments to be made. The data is used to create heterogeneous classes and operational seating plans for each class. Profiles of classes are created and are monitored to allow for adjustments or movement of students for academic or pastoral reasons. The school social worker plays a key role here alongside the class teachers. Special education students are identified using the data on entry, or earlier, and placed in one class, as a part of the heterogeneous grouping.

Tracking of students is carried out well and there are four reporting periods during the year which are also used as points of intervention. Software enables the data to be collected into one data bank and to be analyzed by individual staff so that individual students can be identified for extended tutor time or Saturday school. Extended tutor time is subject based and teacher-student ratios are one to ten; it is compulsory and the expectation is that students will stay late. Saturday tutoring, from nine until noon, is voluntary and is used for students with greatest needs. In grade 7, 40% normally attend, including all the identified special education students. In grade 8, 50% attend with half of the special education students.

Because the school has only been open for two years, it is currently difficult to compare results over time. However results after the first year are encouraging with a 100% pass rate at level 2 or higher in English language arts and a 98% pass rate in mathematics.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

Targets articulated in the Comprehensive Education Plan are appropriately based on the previous performance and expectations for improvement. Curricular maps are used to track individual and class performance. Assessment practices are rigorous and are used in appropriate ways to inform individual goals for students. However, there is a lack of coherence in the ways that intervention is planned across classrooms, grades, and subjects. Outcomes are not sufficiently expressed as specific, measurable, future goals for: individual students, classrooms, grade levels and academic subjects. Consequently, it is difficult to check whether goals have been reached. This minimizes effective measurement of impact. Overall responsibility for this work is held by the individual class group teachers and the principal holds the responsibility thereafter. The school is too small to support an assistant principal or faculty leaders who might otherwise be responsible for this level of accountability. Therefore goals and plans are yet to be linked at all levels with appropriate cross referencing. The principal is aware of this weakness and intends to set in place plans for immediate rectification.

For those students in greatest need of improvement the school finds a number of ways to intervene and provide effective support, including Saturday school. Although attendance could be better, and the school is aware of that, the fact that staff are willing to give a period of their own time to these students at the weekend is highly commendable. Special education students are beginning to perform well. They thrive with the ‘little sister’ buddying program in the classroom. The Wilson Reading program is showing results in extended school time and the attendance of all special education students is close to 100%, apart from Saturday school, which is not compulsory.

High expectations for both academic success and personal development of students are found across the school and conveyed to all parents. Parents are regularly invited to school and invited to carry email conversations with teachers. However the school has yet to embed all the good practices which exists into effective goal and target setting processes that are shared with all concerned.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school provides a carefully planned curriculum which meets mandatory requirements and enables students to gain the required credits for graduation. The school monitors the effectiveness of the curriculum on student outcome and adjustments are made. Mathematics teachers, for example, have changed workbooks and homework response sheets and expect immediate improvement in students’ response.

The principal and teachers are fully aware of their accountability for student achievement. Given the small number of students, the principal herself maps individual student progress on a regular basis. Teachers test at four regular intervals during the school year and differentiate their instruction accordingly. Teachers demonstrate robust subject knowledge which underpins lively instruction with positive engagement from the students.

Advisory time, both at the beginning and the end of the day, is separate from tutor time. It provides an excellent opportunity for lively, sensible and positive discussions about important topical issues for the group. Here the ethos of the YWL Foundation comes through very strongly, allowing the students a freedom of expression and an opportunity to engage with adults on any topic including academic and personal issues. Staff know their students well and respond to all their needs in order to improve academic performance. Each student knows and respects the staff and they recognize and appreciate the concern shown for them.

Learning drives the budget. An example is the way that in order to address weaknesses in mathematics, the principal engages additional staff to team-teach some groups. Scores are increasing above expected levels. Difficult curriculum decisions, such as removing Spanish from the grade 9 curriculum and replacing it with extra English and mathematics, have full staff support in order to improve grades. Attendance is very good; it is given a high priority and monitored closely. Students commented particularly on the efficient follow-up procedures for absence and every incidence of lateness is investigated.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal is well respected and is held in high esteem by the whole school community. She has a clear vision for the school and students as she develops a school where learning, leadership values and respect for others are paramount. Recruitment is carried out in a carefully structured manner with appropriate panels, a period of teaching and tight specification. Essentially she aims to select staff with experience, enthusiasm and energy.

Professional development is seen by both staff and the principal as a key to future improvement. Staff enthusiastically take part in retreats in their own time because, in part, the principal is willing to fund good facilities away from the City. The content of professional development ranges from sessions on the collection and use of data to working with other staff in the YWL network. Overall the impact of this professional learning is effective, but inconsistencies exist and opportunities are lost because systems for monitoring impact and the embedding of practice are not fully developed.

The principal observes lessons on a regular basis and employs a retired principal as a mentor to observe and support staff. Teachers welcome the feedback from formal observations and they are enthusiastic about the coaching and support. However, these outcomes are not recorded so there is no documented evidence of progress.

The school runs smoothly on a day to day basis, with clear routines that are well understood and followed by the whole school community. Staff are expected to contribute to this newly developing school by membership of individual 'task' groups which drive innovation and organization forward. Membership is voluntary, as is attendance at meetings, with most staff participate enthusiastically.

All students are expected to complete 25 hours of community service which is managed by a Field Program coordinator. The network partnerships with other YWL schools are beneficial, particularly the *CollegeBound* program which introduces the students to 'taste' college life through visits. From 10th grade, the school will have a counselor to promote college transfer and develop a focus on future study to help students gain college places.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is undeveloped

The annual goals for the school are identified within the Comprehensive Education Plan which is written by the principal. This document does not link school improvement with explicit goals and grade improvement. There is unclear alignment and focus between ongoing evaluation of progress and the goals, across the school, articulated in the Plan.

Although school data is shared, the analysis of data does not allow easy comparisons of performance across grades and classes because they are not always clearly presented in an accessible manner. This further inhibits strategic evaluation of progress. The capacity to monitor, evaluate, review and cross reference to goals and plans currently rests with the principal. An opportunity exists to use the strengths of other staff to monitor progress. The current system lacks sufficient capacity and rigor.

Information generated by periodic assessment is used to revise plans. Schedules are changed when evidence indicates that blocks of time in particular subjects would greater aid students' concentration, improve curriculum continuity or progress in learning. There is not always enough consistency in the recording and use of assessment data by teachers at quarterly reviews to make interventions really effective and improve students' progress.

Evidence of the use of an experienced social worker shows how some structures for evaluating student progress work well. Where student progress is seriously impeded by events outside school, effective intervention strategies involving buddying, face-to-face counseling and outreach work with the family have produced encouraging reengagement with school, regular attendance and social interaction.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Young Women's Leadership School of Queens (HS 986)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 			X
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 			X
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.	X		
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.	X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X	
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X	
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.	X		
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.	X		
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.	X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 5	X		