



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Young Women's Leadership School

Bronx Campus

Intermediate School / High School 282

601 Stickball Boulevard

Bronx

NY 10467

Principal: Arnette Crocker

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Reviewer: Barry King

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Information about the school

The Young Women's Leadership School is one of a small number of schools which replicates a women's leadership school that was opened in Harlem in 1996. Its overriding goals are to prepare all its students for college entry and develop the girls' leadership capabilities. Potential students are interviewed for their commitment to the values and goals of the school. When oversubscribed, students thought able to benefit from this type of education are enrolled through a blind lottery process. Enrolment can be in both Grade 7 and Grade 9.

The school is in its third year and has 239 students in grades 7 through 9. Of these, 55% are Black, 42% Hispanic and the remainder from other backgrounds, mainly Asian. Seven per cent are special education students, all of whom are educated in mainstream classes. Two per cent, mostly Spanish speakers, are English language learners. The school plans to have 400 students when the grade range is 7 through 12.

The school is part of the empowerment initiative. Such schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

The school does not currently receive Title 1 funding, although it did do so in the previous academic year. Attendance, at 91%, is above average when compared to similar and City schools.

The school is housed entirely in trailers on a small site, with no laboratory or other specialist classrooms. It has the capacity to take only one more grade on this campus.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The overarching goals of college entry and developing the leadership skills of young women drive the activity of all stakeholders.
- The principal is warmly and widely respected and has demonstrated the capacity to make the school successful.
- A climate of high expectations in terms of academic achievement and personal responsibility pervades the school.
- The staff know and respect the students well, which is much appreciated by them.
- A rich curriculum, nurturing relationships, interactive instructional styles and strong external partnerships develop students' leadership capabilities effectively.
- The school uses interim assessments and other data to provide a regular overview of the progress of each student, and keeps a particularly close watch on those on grade boundaries.
- The school gathers data, sets goals and aligns instruction effectively to support students at risk of underperforming.
- The staff have a collaborative culture, sharing data and learning from each other.
- Parents greatly value the work of the school and are incorporated well into its consultative processes.
- The above average attendance results from the school's good strategies to promote it.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend professional development to support teachers in differentiating their instruction.
- Develop a cabinet to support the principal in the running of the school.
- Build on the increasingly effective use of data by empowering all teachers to use data on students' performance in their planning, and by analyzing performance by ethnicity across the whole school.
- Ensure the Comprehensive Education Plan has clear priorities and quantifiable goals, and progress towards them is regularly reviewed.
- Extend the use of modern technology in teaching and learning.
- Ensure that the school has premises of sufficient size and range to accommodate the increasing number of students and their needs.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Under the respected and astute leadership of the principal, this new school has been successfully established. As one of the women's leadership schools, it has clear goals that drive all that it does, and the school has made good progress in establishing the foundations for meeting them. It has a committed staff who share in its ambitions and together they have created a very nurturing environment in which the students are flourishing. One student summed this up by saying, 'They treat you like family'. This strong sense of security within the school has been the basis for the students' academic endeavor and the strides they have made in accepting leadership roles. The students are well cared for, but equally very high expectations are set for them, something to which they respond well. The school deploys a suitable range of periodic assessments, which it uses to chart and promote the progress of each student effectively.

The school monitors its performance closely and has a sure understanding of what is needed to improve it. The main priority is to secure another site, as at the start of next year it will have reached capacity without yet admitting grades 11 and 12. The school currently lacks a cabinet to support the principal in managing its growth. Differentiation of instruction is still at an early stage. These and other challenges are within the compass of the school to overcome given its fine track record so far.

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 proficient.

The school collects baseline data on entry and then systemically documents the progress of each student through periodic assessments in English language arts and mathematics using the Princeton Review approximately every six weeks. Students' progress is also evaluated at each of six marking periods during the year, which in all cases are preceded by what the school calls an 'academic alert', which is sent to all parents a little prior to the school's report card. This means that parents are informed 12 times in a year of their child's progress, and are welcome to ask for any interim information they feel is necessary. At the classroom level, each teacher keeps an academic intervention binder documenting each child's progress, although the school recognizes that this data could be better analyzed and put to more use in planning instruction. The principal holds data on the performance of each grade, and class teachers on each or their classes. So far, data is less well generated on progress in subjects other than English and mathematics.

The school is equally alert to the progress of special education students and English language learners, and in these cases uses additional standardized assessments. It analyzes the progress of the weakest third of its students by ethnicity but does not do this for the whole student body. It pays particularly close attention to the performance of students close to the borderline of different grades, whom it refers to as 'pushables' and

'slippables', to try to ensure they all achieve the highest grade possible. The school uses data comparatively where it can, for example in comparing year on year performance and its own outcomes against other schools. It is also aware of differences between English language arts and mathematics, but the extent of comparative evaluations is limited by the fact that certain data sets are not currently generated.

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.

The overriding goals of the school, to get all students into college and to develop the girls' leadership skills, galvanize the work of staff, parents and students. These ambitious goals represent a long journey and the school has established effective procedures through which teachers can discuss the progress of individual students and set shorter-term goals for them. For example, this happens at meeting times each Friday and through scheduled grade meetings. Key staff meet weekly to consider students who may be having difficulties, and where necessary initiate goals and plans to support them. Students are involved themselves in mapping out their futures by setting their goals at the beginning of the year. They meet four times a week with particular teachers in small groups in advisory sessions, which means that their needs are well known to staff. Class teachers have personalized goals for the achievement of each of their students and class goals in terms of ensuring that specific percentages of students achieve minimum grades. The goals for special education students, English language learners and those in danger of underperforming are particularly well set. The goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan are also set collaboratively but the priorities are not clear and not all intentions have been translated into measurable outcomes with clear success criteria. This means that the plan does not function as effectively as it might in focusing and unifying the efforts of the school to improve.

High expectations run like a current through the school. As one student wrote in her evaluation of her work and life in school, 'Because this school expects excellence from everyone it is important to do your best'. Parents are closely involved in discussing students' progress and helping to set goals through a range of collaborative arrangements. The principal is proactive in this process and describes the parents as 'partners'.

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's curriculum is carefully modeled on that of the first women's leadership school. In addition to the broad general education of the mainstream classes, it provides support programs after school and on Saturdays, and precedes each academic year with a summer bridge program for new students. The range of after-school clubs is well enriched through a program of activities to develop the self-esteem and leadership skills of the students. This includes a requirement that all students complete 25 hours of community service each year while in grades 7 and 8, which rises to 50 hours in the high school

grades. These programs are having demonstrable effects on the personal self-confidence and social and leadership skills of the students.

Teachers are held accountable for their teaching, for example through conferences about the progress of their students and lesson observations. They are also reflective about their practice and set goals for their personal development. Teachers use instructional techniques that require the students to take active roles in the classroom, so building their communication and other leadership skills. They do not as yet make much use of modern technology to enrich the teaching and learning. Students are mostly engaged in lessons and say that they enjoy them. However, this engagement is diminished in some cases because students find it difficult to understand the tasks that have been set, while others finish early and do not have extension tasks. The school recognizes that improving differentiation is a high priority, and it is a major heading in its professional development plan. The cramped site causes some classes to be larger than desirable and the lack of specialist facilities inhibits some aspects of instruction. For example, there are no laboratories for science.

The budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions are suitably aligned to the needs of the students. As an example, the school used empowerment school funding to hire teachers of Spanish and strengthen the teaching of special education students. The schedule allows opportunities for teachers to meet together, although at the moment those available for common planning time are limited. There are good arrangements to ensure that the staff know and respond well to the students' academic and personal needs, for example through the advisory sessions four times a week. The supportive culture of the school is much appreciated by the students, who feel safe and know that there is always a teacher they can turn to if in difficulty. This is one of the reasons why attendance is above average, and the school also has good strategies, such as first day home calling, to support it. Close attention is also paid to punctuality.

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's clear vision, firm purpose and kindly manner have been central to the successful foundation of this school. This is reflected in the respect and affection that the community has for her. She has employed criteria and procedures for the recruitment of staff that have created a faculty who subscribe to the school's values and goals, although she has not yet appointed an assistant principal to help her run the school. She recognizes that, as the school grows, this is an essential next step.

The professional development plan has been based upon sensible priorities, although there is not a clear link to those in the Comprehensive Education Plan. The school's professional development priorities have been married with those of the teachers, who are enthusiastic to learn from each other. This happens through the various arrangements for meeting together and intervisitations, though the latter are limited in number. The staff's development has been further supported by the hiring of expert external consultants, visits to the Harlem leadership school and the use of study books. Further development for the staff comes about as a result of the formal lesson observations by the principal and her more frequent learning walks. Staff are grateful for the thorough, detailed feedback that gives them clear guidance for improving their practice. These evaluations are helpful but

do not sufficiently take into account the impact of instruction on the learning of students, or the success of differentiation strategies.

The staff are team players and, in this small school, work closely together in reviewing their work and realigning students' goals and instruction when necessary. The review of the Comprehensive Education Plan is, however, not frequently undertaken, except by the principal informally. The school runs smoothly, although the schedule is determined in part by the need to visit the neighboring elementary school at a certain time for lunch, another consequence of the school's inadequate accommodation. The school has built a very strong partnership with parents and a number of other organizations, such as Lehman Brothers that provides an after school course on financial literacy. The school is also well supported through its sister schools in the women's leadership group.

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 proficient.

The school keeps a close watch on the academic progress of its students and also monitors the growth in their personal qualities. It does this through the range of regular tests and assessments it administers, and through the strong pastoral arrangements in the advisory sessions that enable the school to have a good, rounded view of each student. This enables it to make comparisons between the students' progress and to evaluate their progress towards their goals. Formal arrangements, and the frequent encounters staff have with each other in this small school, ensure that they collaborate to share data, reformulate goals and plans, and realign instruction for any students who may not be doing well enough. This attention to progress of individual students toward their goals, and toward class goals set by individual teachers, means that the success of the students is soundly calibrated. The monitoring of students near a grade boundary is particularly close.

In the light of the monitoring and evaluating of its work, a number of revisions have been made at the whole school level. An example of a sensitive and agile adjustment to its ways of working was the introduction of Saturday classes at an earlier point in the year to give students a longer run of support to reach their target grades. However, the Comprehensive Education Plan has not yet been reviewed this year and it is now beginning to look out of date. The school realizes that it needs to formalize the review process for the plan and that this will be more easily facilitated if the plan has clearer priorities and sharper goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Young Women's Leadership School, Bronx Campus (IS/HS 282)	∅	✓	+
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	