



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**The Jonathan Levin High School for Media and
Communications**

**High School 414
240 East 172 Street
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: Nasib Hoxha

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Reviewer: Dr. Deidre Farmbry

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Jonathan Levin High School for Media and Communications is located in the South Bronx. Enrolled are 517 students from grade 9 through grade 12. Hispanic students comprise 50% of the population, Black students 40%, Asian students 8% and White students 2%. Recently, students have immigrated from the Dominican Republic, Central America, and Africa. Approximately 93% are eligible for Title 1 funding, a figure significantly higher than similar schools and New York City schools in general. There are 80 English language learners, most of whom speak Spanish. There are 81 special education students. Recent data about an incoming freshman class indicate that 51.6% of the students entering grade 9 were over-aged for that grade level, compared to 40.1% for similar schools and 28.9% for other New York City schools. The school's attendance rate is higher than similar schools or City schools at 86%.

In addition to receiving a comprehensive academic education, students at the school learn about film, television and print media and engage in projects designed to highlight their understanding of media and communications.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school successfully integrates its focus on media and communications with its focus on graduation requirements.
- The school actively refines its practices regarding data collection and analysis.
- The school is successfully increasing attendance and making positive progress with students at all levels of achievement.
- The school successfully uses data to identify areas for professional development of staff across the school and in different subjects.
- Teachers' questioning techniques enable students to demonstrate and articulate their understanding of concepts.
- Students produce good quality work which reflects the school's media and communications theme.
- Creative scheduling enables teachers to meet daily for planned professional development.
- The school has successfully created an environment conducive to teaching and learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Seek more opportunities for students to showcase their skill in media and communications.
- Seek more partnerships capable of providing internships and entrepreneurial opportunities for students.
- Provide professional development in differentiated instruction to give all teachers a wide range of instructional strategies.
- Ensure that all staff have the technical expertise to retrieve data and use it to compare students' progress.
- Ensure the staff make more effective interventions to improve the success of students from more challenging circumstances.
- Be more consistent in communicating and applying consequences for disciplinary incidents.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The Jonathan Levin High School for Media and Communications presents a unique learning context for students. The school's focus on media and communications engages students and is conducive to student projects that reflect the multiple ways in which students learn and achieve. A state-of-the-art media room enables students to create competition-quality photographs and video productions. The students' talents have attracted the interest of Bronx officials who have commissioned the students to produce a documentary on the Bronx, titled "Recapturing Glory," to be aired on cable television.

Aware of the need to disaggregate data to individual student levels, the school is using a new technology program to yield more data for each student. With more detailed information, the school intends to program more effectively for the diverse array of students' achievement levels and interests.

Planning for improvement is secure. The school makes good use of data to refine and adjust the curriculum, programs for staff development and for scheduling. There are some routines where communication is not sufficiently robust and teachers need further training to plan work that meets the full range of students in every class.

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 uses the data provided by the district to assess students' learning needs. It also generates data through formative and summative classroom assessments and through standard reading-assessment instruments. The school is piloting a new computer program to enable staff to receive more detailed class profiles and to give students very specific reports on their areas for development. Although still in development, the program is significantly improving the school's capacity to make accurate comparisons of progress between classes, ethnic and other student groups. The longer term goal is to use specific information to develop individualized improvement plans for each student.

The school analyzes data from a range of state tests to target specifically support for English language learners. Those students designated as in need of special education services, receive intervention based on the specifications of their individualized education plans. These plans reflect analysis of the data from Regents Competency Test results and teachers' self-made tests.

The students in grade 9 are a particular focus, as their overall reading levels are very low. The school analyzes reading inventories and uses the results to help determine which type of literacy support to give to students. Suspension data, especially those relative to

students in grade 9, is used to help determine which students should be referred for special counseling programs provided by the Office of Youth Development.

The school measures its progress against other schools in the region. To gauge its progress from year to year, the school looks at its attendance and achievement data over time. The school also makes national comparisons on common high school assessments such as the Scholastic Achievement Tests or SAT, to see how the students measure up nationally. These comparisons assist the school in determining its own benchmarks for progress across subjects and grades.

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 well developed.

The school successfully uses diagnostic test data to set goals and establish instructional priorities. Goals are realistic and measurable. With most students below grade level when they start at the school, a collaborative decision was taken to focus efforts on literacy and to have the literacy coach provide in-class support. This approach has been very effective.

Students in greatest need of improvement receive good support. For instance, paraprofessionals assist students with low skill levels, and special education and regular education teachers often team-teach to provide extra help in classes containing special education students. In planning work, every teacher makes full use of the assessed skills-level for students receiving special education services. To meet the needs of the English language learners, the school makes good use of a teacher hired to focus on English as a second language. This teacher meets three times a week with those students needing most help, ensuring that they regularly get the right work to help them make progress.

Improvement plans drive the school strongly and foster high expectations. The school makes parents and students fully aware of its strong emphasis on high standards. One student stated her amazement that even students with grade averages of 90 are pushed to do more. Another expressed pride that he had acquired new skills, stating, “My teachers spark the power of my imagination.”

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 well developed.

The school uses assessments from the mandated curriculum, texts and computer programs, to yield valuable data which helps the teachers plan new work. It also successfully uses assessments from the students’ media and communications studies. For example, teachers record students’ skills in writing film story-boards, editing footage and in making the sound tracks. Further assessments show the students’ progress in acquiring practical skills such as the use of cameras and cables for shooting scenes and their capabilities in using the internet to research facts about the Bronx.

The students generally engage well with their work and stay on task. Apart from in the media lessons, there is little evidence of work being differentiated regularly to accommodate individual student's learning styles or achievement levels.

The analysis of data drives decisions about budgets, staffing and schedules. For example, an increase in the number of English language learners and special education students led to the hiring of additional teachers specifically to support these two groups. The school makes good use scheduling, responding flexibly to changing or new circumstances. The Regent's data showed that a change in the school's science sequence was needed to improve results in the lower grades. The school then changed the order of elements of the science curriculum to match more closely with the developmental stages of the students.

The many "hands-on" activities keep students engaged and interested in their work, with media projects being a clear favorite. Teachers use open-ended questions very well to ensure students fully understand what they have learned. In some cases they extend this technique by asking students to explain their thinking to others. Students eagerly go to the board to demonstrate how they arrive at an answer or to explain a process.

Students, teachers, and parents express very positive sentiments about the closely-knit school family. One student stated, "This school is my second family, like a community and like your home."

Careful attention is given to increasing the attendance rate and the school consistently applies routines for monitoring absences. Communication between school and home through notes, phone calls and, where needed, visits from attendance workers are proving successful.

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 well developed.

The school selects staff on their capacity to enhance the specific career theme and to motivate students who need additional help to accelerate their achievement. For instance, the media communications teacher has professional movie experience and was actively recruited to teach at the school. Skill in the use of data is a further skill in which prospective teachers must demonstrate competence. To deepen the capacity of the assistant principals as instructional leaders, the principal assigned each the responsibility for two subject areas as well for oversight of a particular grade. Teachers comment positively on the impact of this change.

The analysis of data on students' achievements underpins professional development programs for the teachers. For example, when data indicated that students were not doing well enough on the segments of the Regents examinations that required writing for critique and analysis, a program of professional development was started to help teachers address this aspect of writing with more confidence.

The principal and assistant principals frequently observe lessons. They discuss with each teacher the strengths and areas for development observed. The teachers visit each others' classrooms and have opportunities to see mini lessons taught by their peers. These professional observations and dialogues reinforce the school's high expectations for classroom practice and identify areas that warrant a whole school focus.

Data analysis has boosted collegiality. It brings the teachers together to target students based on feedback from various assessments. This process has been enhanced and strengthened through the pilot technology project for storing and retrieving data. However, some teachers need more training in the use of this technology to view and analyze data. A common period each day facilitates collaborative team planning and provides a good context for scheduled staff exchanges.

The principal is respected by the school community. His work and leadership as an administrator when the school was configured as one large comprehensive high school, is evidence of a continuing capacity to affect change. He understands the challenges of transforming the school's image in the eye of the community and generating sustained improvement. He supports the staff fully in their efforts to improve the school further and is acknowledged by the whole school community as being accessible, fair and insightful.

There are sufficient opportunities for sharing expectations, communicating changes, and helping people understanding what must be done to facilitate smooth operations. However, there are gaps in communication on the follow-up to disciplinary incidents. Some inconsistencies between policy and application prevent the school from running as smoothly as they would like. The school does not always engage sufficiently widely with community agencies to provide support to increase staff effectiveness in areas such as behavior management and emotional support.

The school successfully uses existing partners to support the goal of improving achievement. For instance, the Bronx documentary project is developing students' skills in research and literacy. An annual project involving a community partner group making public service announcements, helps develop student advocacy around civic issues. Apart from these developments, the opportunities for students to market their talents or showcase their work are limited. The quality of work evident in the school, argues strongly for greater student access to internship and entrepreneurial opportunities.

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 well developed.

The school uses data consistently to guide its planning. When reviewing progress, administrators look at the outcomes from current and previous goals to decide what corrective measures to put in place. The school planning is flexible and is revised regularly to improve student outcomes. For example the school plans to change the sequence of history courses to avoid the current two year sequence of global history, which aligns uneasily with some students' weak literacy skills.

The pilot data program is being used well to plan and create more opportunities for comparisons of performance across grades. It provides greater consistency of assessment to facilitate more accurate and meaningful cross-grade judgments and provide a sharper tool to improve further the quality of the curriculum and of instruction.

The school understands its strengths and areas for improvement accurately. The Comprehensive Educational Plan has clear goals, benchmarks and timelines for progress, to address many of the items identified in this report.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Jonathan Levin High School for Media and Communications (HS 414)		∅	✓	+
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