



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Young Women's Leadership School

Middle-High School 610

**105 East 106 Street
New York
NY 10029**

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Young Women's Leadership School is a middle-high school with 401 students from grade 7 through grade 12. The school population comprises 36.3% Black, 58.5% Hispanic, 1.5% White, and 2.7% Asian students. The student body includes 1.5% English language learners and 4.7% special education students. Girls account for 100% of the students enrolled. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 94%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 63% eligibility.

Established in 1996, the school has the distinction of being the first all-girls public school to open in the nation in at least twenty-five years. It serves as a model for other Young Women's Leadership schools in and outside of New York City. The principal has led the school since September 2007.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The new principal and two assistant principals provide thoughtful and attentive leadership and management with a very clear vision for the future.
- Students value teachers' commitment to help them to learn, work hard, set personal goals, develop a personal voice and make informed choices.
- Consistently high expectations are evident in every aspect of school life and, as such, improve students' learning, development and achievement.
- A warm, energetic and dedicated staff team enhance their professional skills through collaboration, open communication and intervisitations.
- Parents are kept well informed of students' academic, social and emotional progress through email, mail, phone calls, advisor outreach and invitations.
- The halls and classrooms are filled with colorful, rigorous and engaging work that reflects the creative energy of the students' and staff.
- Useful progress has already been made in the development of systems and structures for the collection of data and student progress.
- There are systems and structures in place to ensure the smooth and efficient operation of the school which positively impacts on attendance
- Through the efforts of advisors, guidance and the exemplary college advisory program 100% of all graduating seniors are accepted into college.
- Effective and diverse partnerships with a number of outside organizations offer the students a wide range of additional opportunities.

What the school needs to improve

- Formalize the setting of data- based student and teacher goals that are objectively measurable within clear time-frames.
- Establish entry level baseline assessments in both English and math providing a starting point for evaluating student growth and progress.
- Make better use of data for ethnic groups to better identify student needs and target suitable intervention.
- Ensure that all teachers use data regularly and consistently to match work to student needs.
- Maintain in school and external professional development to build consistency in teachers' skills and alignment across grades and content.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The new administrative team has maintained and strengthened the vision for the school's development. The standards set for student achievement are clearly defined, with high expectations for the academic and personal growth of each individual student at the heart of their vision for success. There is an unspoken competition between teachers to do what it takes to ensure students achieve to a high standard, resulting in 100% of each graduating class going on to college. Many teachers have been at the school for a long time and are committed to its mission. They foster a personalized instructional program, based on identifying students in need of support, setting strategic goals for their success and providing differentiated interventions. Advisories, tutorials, small group instruction and individual plans are used to ensure achievement and convey high expectations. Instruction focuses well on meeting students' needs, but there is not consistency in how this is done across both middle and high school. The school monitors its own performance in different classes, grade and subjects leading to action plans and professional development decisions. Although systems for monitoring whole-school planning are becoming more effective, they do not make full use of interim goals and time frames to measure the progress and impact of ongoing strategies or to plan strategically for the long-term. Very effective systems that ensure the smooth operation of the school promote excellent behavior, high attendance, enjoyment of learning and an atmosphere of trust and respect between students and staff. Guidance, college advisement and advisory support are very effective in promoting students' personal and academic development and keeping them on track to achieve their goals. Community service and internships matched to students' interests are the result of strong outreach with partnerships and the community. The school has developed strong, varied and productive partnerships with outside organizations and museums that provide support and enhancement of the curriculum.

The school has made some progress in addressing issues raised in the previous Quality Review. There has been a stronger focus on collecting data and looking at the story it reveals with all constituencies, but closer attention needs to be paid to data review of subgroups, particularly within ethnic diversities. Assessments are done by grade and class, but there has not been much diagnostic testing using the new available tools. Students have been involved in goal setting and evaluating their own progress through the use of mid-year transcript reviews in their advisories, and this has had positive results. Although there is no official parent coordinator, the school has made some progress towards increasing family involvement. The school's inquiry team is focusing on former English language learners who did not make one year's growth in math from grade 6 to grade 7. This focus led to a school-wide focus of the language embedded in all content area assessments and its impact on performance for this category of students in all grades.

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 the student's progress over time.

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

The school does a very good job of collecting various data from formative and summative assessments, portfolios and notes from student conferences. Teachers were trained in the use of ARIS, Acuity and analysis of transcripts and data. There are good systems and procedures in place to make data accessible, ensuring a good understanding of individual student performance and progress, by class, grade level, and student subgroups. Teachers use this data to inform instruction and provide small group intervention and tutoring. Grade advisors advocate for students and ensure they receive the support needed to be successful. Although there are only five official English language learners and twenty students needing special education support services, teachers are aware and attentive to their particular needs. Baseline assessments and diagnostics for new students are not currently done, but the school plans to implement these procedures in the fall. Gender differences are obviously not an issue, but there are gaps in the performance of Hispanics, the school's largest population that includes multiple subgroups. The school has not disaggregated the performance of these students and has not yet provided targeted support for specific sub-groups. Although student performance is analyzed, the focus of analysis is more on individuals, classes, grades and subjects, rather than groups and past performance. Therefore, there is an incomplete picture of performance trends and patterns. Performance is compared to same gender and other similar schools, both within and out of their peer group, as well as private schools.

The middle school uses portfolios to maintain student data and passes them on to the next grade. The plan is to continue this practice in the high school. Data from middle school assessments has shown the need to strengthen literacy skills through content vocabulary development, particularly for former English language learners. This is the focus of the school's inquiry work, which will be expanded to high school.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

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

Goal setting for departments and specific grades is done collaboratively by grade, department and in school wide meetings. Although plans are in place for achieving the stated goals, they do not include time frames for achievement and interim benchmarks. As a result, progress is not linked to smaller achievable goals. Students have opportunities to meet with their grade and college advisors to evaluate their progress using mid year transcript reviews. They set goals to improve their grades and determine if they are on track for promotion, graduation and acceptance to college. However, there is no formal action plan developed that links grades to learning outcomes and therefore the focus is more on grades rather than what a student needs to do to improve these grades.

Analysis of student performance allows the school to provide layers of support through prompt, effective small group instruction and intervention, reviewing and modifying as necessary. Students know what is expected of them, and if struggling, receive individual or small group support. They enjoy their classes and are eager to attend school. Parents are positive about the excellent, seamless exchange of information as teachers email or call them often, sharing students' successes, challenges and special opportunities for internships, travel and community service, and use school events for informal exchanges about students. Extremely high expectations are conveyed on the first day a student arrives in grade 7, and continue through to their senior year. The community knows each student personally, intellectually and emotionally, and works together to ensure that students' attain their goals. Significant improvements in the achievement of all students are evidenced by students' pass rates.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

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

The curriculum has a well developed curriculum that is broad and interesting. Using Understanding by Design, teachers develop units with built-in assessments opportunities and rubric-based projects. As a consequence, students have a clear sense of what is expected of them. Some teachers work with outside organizations to enrich the curriculum. Often these links have a community service component. Partnerships with arts organizations offer students excellent opportunities for creative outlets. The school and often local museums are filled with students' artistic displays and work. Students take classes and participate in drama, photography, chorus, string tuition and dance. They have opportunities to see Broadway shows and take international trips, all of which expand and enrich the curriculum. The school is a joyous and challenging learning environment where the core values of cooperation, leadership, development of student voice and dedication to community inspire all stakeholders. Relationships are greatly regarded and everyone sees the members of the school community as a family, thereby contributing strongly to the school as a learning community.

Teachers work hard to match work to student needs. Differentiation occurs in student configurations such as group work, literature circles, research projects with different topics and targeted small group instruction. Next year the school will implement an "honors with distinction" within each class, providing students with additional opportunities for academic challenge. Student attendance is high reflecting students' motivation and commitment to coming to school and the well-established systems to monitor attendance. Students and parents feel that a deep sense of trust and mutual respect exists in the school, leading to openness, transparency and supportive communication. Learning is personalized and teachers frequently reach out to students and provide opportunities and internships that match students' interests. Students appreciate support and guidance, recognizing they are being prepared for college and life in the community, and as a result are successful.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

As a result of clear procedures, the school runs very smoothly and efficiently. The principal is committed to helping teachers improve classroom skills. She uses observations to set student centered school wide goals, focused on differentiation and use of data to inform instruction. There are frequent learning walks, observations and analysis of data with useful feedback. This results in differentiated professional development and support. Staff members meet every Friday morning and every other Monday for professional development. Intervisitation is common, and teachers frequently "drop in" to classrooms to observe, see strategies in action and find out how a student who struggles in their class performs in another. This year, intervisitations were formalized around literacy, and teachers used protocols to focus their visits. As a small school where some departments only have one teacher, professional development outside the building is encouraged to expand instructional experiences. Teachers new to the profession or the school receive purposeful orientation, are partnered with a buddy teacher and receive support from specialists to enhance their skills. In addition to the strong advisory program, two counsellors provide a high level of social skills development and college advisory. A very successful partnership with College Now enables students to receive college credit and experience. Each student also selects or is assigned a staff member who functions as a personal advocate.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has a clear understanding of itself as an institution committed to providing continuous challenge and growth opportunities for its students. The administrative team had a clear sense of direction for this year. Their plan focused on improving student outcomes through use of assessments, collection of well varied data and providing support to improve instruction and move the school forward. As a result, teachers are more intentionally using data to inform their teaching and plan next steps. Next year, the school plans to solidify the use of diagnostic tools and assessments to set baselines, especially for incoming students, strengthen the use of formative assessments in the high school, measure the effectiveness of interventions and implement necessary adjustments.. This year's school-wide focus on literacy has begun to identify the skills students need to know, and track their progress in achieving them. Although teachers change and modify programs as soon as evidence shows it is required, the lack of specific success criteria and timelines make it more difficult to evaluate whether the pace of improvement is sufficient and determine the next stage of improvement. The school reviews and revises its practices as needed. This year the school utilized scholarship reports, item analysis of Regents exams and use of mock Regents and advanced placement exams as diagnostics, interpreting the results to determine next steps. Next year the school will implement Saturday academies to further support targeted student progress.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Young Women's Leadership School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?	*				
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?			X		
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?					X
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?					X
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?					X
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?					X
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped

* The score for this sub-criterion is omitted due to the low proportion of students in this category.