

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

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

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

Principal: Nasib Hoxha

**Dates of review: March 1 – 2, 2010
Lead Reviewer: Michael L. Schurek**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Jonathan Levin High School for Media and Communication is a high school with 457 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 27% Black, 71% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 90.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

This school community regularly showcases their students' skills in their media and communication productions, acting and art, thereby motivating and building the self-esteem that enables their students to make academic progress. The school has formed numerous partnerships to support students that include a relationship with Bronx Net Cable Television. This organization motivates students by sponsoring media and communication internships for them. The school services such a highly transient population that it replaces approximately 50% of its student body each year through discharges and new admissions. Despite these very difficult conditions, the school manages to make consistent academic progress as evidenced by yearly scholarship report increases.

The principal has united the staff in the school's goal of raising student outcomes. He has organized the staff by subject area into teacher teams that use varied sources of data to focus primarily on the school's lowest achieving students. These collaborative inquiries have fostered instructional coherence as evidenced by the writing that takes place in every subject class to accelerate English language arts, an area of need identified by data analysis. They also empower teachers to make key decisions and adjust classroom practices to ensure student success.

Professional development activities have increased the use of technology in the school. At this time, the school is working to improve differentiation in all lessons. However, teachers demonstrate varied abilities resulting in unequal levels of student engagement. Although rubrics are common in many classrooms to prepare for Regents exams, they are not used in many grades and subjects to provide students with specific next steps to improve the quality of submitted work. The school does not generate differentiated learning goals for subgroups and is developing systems to do so in order to make even greater gains with these students. Despite this absence of learning goals, the school's use of technology, multi-level textbooks and workbooks, hands-on lessons, after-school, summer school, Saturday classes and tutoring have all contributed to exemplary proficiency gains for all student subgroups.

Parents praise the open-door policy of the principal and are especially pleased that the school is a very safe, supportive environment for their children. They also appreciate the frequent phone calls they receive regarding the progress of their children and the translators available to them at all meetings. The school effectively adjusts organizational and instructional practices to achieve goals in some subject areas. However, action plans designed to meet these goals do not contain interim benchmarks linked to long-term goals to measure progress along the way. This results in the school not making necessary timely adjustments in all targeted areas.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is a safe place where students are engaged in learning and they appreciate the high level of support they receive for their personal and academic development.
 - All classes are self-contained so that the teachers move from class to class instead of the students, except for classes requiring special locations. As a result, the school reports extremely low numbers of incidents and minimal suspension rates.
 - Each assistant principal is assigned, and collaborates with, grade-specific teachers to form a support group for their cohort. This results in each student being known by name and receiving high levels of support. Staff contact families immediately if attendance needs attention, and also call homes with positive feedback to recognize progress. The school conducts monthly school assemblies to acknowledge exemplary attendance and honor roll resulting in improvements in both of these areas.
- The school's systems and partnerships are highly effective in supporting students and their families in continual learning that promotes students' personal and academic growth.
 - The integrated service center's youth development team works with staff by conducting sensitivity workshops to help them build trust with high-risk students. In addition, the New York City police department provides gang awareness and Internet safety workshops for staff and students. These practices are successful in contributing to the creation of a safe and respectful school culture.
 - The school has developed solid external partnerships that provide student support services as evidenced by the appearance of the Channel 7 news anchor, who is sponsoring college scholarships for students together with the Atlantic Broadcasting Corporation and Disney through an essay writing and community service video contest. The school has also formed a partnership with Bronx Net, the local cable television provider, to establish media internships for its students. These supports are especially important to many families in this community with challenging economic conditions.
- Professional collaboration is a high priority and faculty profit from varied opportunities to share and develop strengths as individuals and as members of the teaching community.
 - All teachers are engaged in twice weekly subject team meetings where they work collaboratively to develop strategies designed to improve student outcomes. English language arts teachers have developed low-status writing techniques to reduce student anxiety and improve the skills of reluctant writers after noticing low test scores and examining student writing.
 - Team members embrace collaborative practice because they feel empowered to make decisions and are supported in this by colleagues and by the administration. As one team member remarked, "We develop our lessons

together and look forward to feedback from our assistant principal in order to develop even more effective practices.”

- The principal and his cabinet have established effective systems for evaluating instructional and organizational decisions and make adjustments to improve student learning.
 - Administrators keep a close eye on adherence to curriculum maps and pacing calendars and review students’ performance and progress to know when to make organizational adjustments. This year’s geometry classes were moved mid-year to double block scheduling because of pacing problems. In addition, the school is presently revising math offerings for the upcoming school year to include an algebra/ geometry course to support student learning and give them broad-based knowledge that prepares them more adequately for the Regents.
 - School leaders attend teacher team meetings each week and conduct daily walkthroughs to help teachers make instructional adjustments that improve student outcomes. For example, geometry exams are analyzed to determine the topics that appear most frequently. This item analysis is used to prioritize topics and adjust time on task for each area to enable the curriculum to be fully covered in time for the Regents exam, with extra emphasis on the more heavily weighted topics. This practice has contributed to a 10 percent pass rate increase in this year’s scholarship report.
- Administrators and teachers gather a wide-range of data to understand individual student and subgroup performance, progress, and learning needs.
 - Because of irregular Acuity reporting patterns, the school supplements these tools by administering a specialized reading assessment and using data-linked software to create assessments in math, science, and social studies. These results are combined with class level data by teams and individual teachers to adjust school practices such as increasing student writing in every class, an area identified as in need of improvement.
 - Teachers utilize subject-specific grading software to generate progress reports each marking period that enable students and families to track performance towards meeting subject goals. Staff use these reports to support students through after-school and Saturday classes, on-line programs, and teacher tutoring, resulting in steady gains in Regents pass rates and scholarship reports.
- The principal is creating a learning community that is focused on student outcomes with a vision to accelerate learning.
 - The school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan, principal’s performance review objectives, and self-evaluation form align with each other and drive the school’s focus on improving student attendance and performance. As a result, the school has experienced robust gains in math and science Regents and earned extra credit on their progress report for exemplary gains for their English language learner, special education, and lowest third students.
 - The principal shares data with the entire community and gathers input from all staff through his departmental team leaders before finalizing goals with the school leadership team. This team adds input from its parent and student members to foster ownership of the goals by the entire community.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen differentiation of instruction so that all lessons engage students and offer suitable challenge at the right levels, including effective questioning that elicits higher-order thinking and extends learning.
 - While many teachers demonstrate sound open-ended questioning and utilize technology during their lessons, levels of student engagement vary and most classrooms have limited displays or portfolios of student work products.
 - All curriculum offerings align with State standards and bi-leveled workbooks provide differentiated homework in many subjects. Many teachers group students, but this grouping is not purposeful as, in many classes, all groups perform identical tasks. Some teachers do not plan differentiated activities to engage both the lowest and highest achieving students in challenging activities to successfully meet their needs.
- Set measureable and differentiated learning goals in all subjects for student subgroups, including special education students and English language learners, in order to specifically target their needs and improve student outcomes still further.
 - All students are set scholarship goals that target credit accumulation. However, differentiated learning goals for targeted subgroups have not yet been established. Despite this, the school's use of multi-leveled workbooks, manipulatives, and teacher interventions has enabled it to make exemplary gains in closing the achievement gap. Even though the school has action plans to develop a school-wide goal setting process, it is still developing systems to set goals for student subgroups in all subjects to accelerate their learning.
- Strengthen teachers' responses to all student work by ensuring they reflect guiding comments and levels of performance based on specific rubrics in order to convey specific next steps for improvement.
 - Teachers regularly use rubrics to prepare for upcoming Regents exams. However, it is not established instructional practice in all grades and subjects to use rubrics to identify next steps and provide students with the opportunity to improve the quality of submitted work.
 - The school's parent coordinator has conducted workshops for parents in the use of ARIS Parent Link with minimal numbers of parent participation. The school uses Easy Grade Pro grading software to make grading data available to students and teachers. This program is used to print progress reports that are mailed home to the families of students whose promotion is in doubt.
- Refine action planning by linking all interim goals to specific benchmarks to enable the principal and faculty to modify goals and objectives in a timely manner in order to optimize the impact of actions.
 - Action plans generally use percentage-based target gains as the measurement toward meeting overall goals in the areas of attendance, graduation rate, credit accumulation, goal setting, and differentiated instruction. However, there are no interim benchmarks to enable progress towards these goals to be measured so that changes can be made along the way. In addition, structures to measure progress of student subgroups are informal and just beginning to develop.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: The Jonathan Levin High School for Media and Communication	Δ	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?		X		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			X	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?		X					
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X				
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed