

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**The Young Women's Leadership School, Queens**

**Secondary School Q896**

**150-91 87 ROAD  
QUEENS  
NY 11432**

**Principal: Avionne Gumbs**

**Dates of review: February 5-6, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Beverly Ffolkes-Bryant, Ed.D**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

The Young Women's Leadership School, Queens is a secondary school with 508 students from 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 57% Black, 19% Hispanic, 2% White, and 21% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 0% special education students. Boys account for 0% of the students enrolled and girls account for 100%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 93.1%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is underdeveloped.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and staff work as a unified team to create a calm, respectful and orderly environment for learning to take place. (1.4)
  - Students remarked how much they love the school. They all mention how comfortable they are in going to a teacher anytime during the day to help them with a problem or if they do not understand something in class. Student voices are welcomed during the Advisory period and the principal and assistant principal have an open door policy and students can speak to them any time. In addition, the school has a student government with representatives from every grade that meets every Wednesday as well as a School Spirit Committee, plus there are two students on the School Leadership Team. Students report that the teachers in the school really try to get to know them better and are encouraging habits that support teachers' efforts to keep students on track for academic success, such as the College Bound Initiatives. Through trips, workshops, community service activities and alumni from various colleges coming to speak to them, students from grades 6-12 are made aware of the various college opportunities afforded to them.
  - As a result of the school not having a curriculum for their advisory program, the dean and the guidance counselor recently found "Overcoming Obstacles Life Skills Program", which helps middle and high school students learn the skills they need to excel in school, at home and on the job. The program includes curriculum materials, teacher training workshops and ongoing support services. The school is planning for the dean and the guidance counselor to work with teachers on program implementation and provide individual supports for students as needed. It is hoped that this new initiative will ensure that their students will learn the communication, decision making and goal setting skills they need to be successful in life in order to accelerate students' focus on learning.
- The school has established a tool for monitoring teaching practice with some focus on improving instructional practices. (4.1)
  - Based on the recommendation of the previous Quality Review to "use the observation tool to develop with teacher input goals and plans that reflect and support an observation template to use in attainment of school wide goals," the principal created an observation template that is based on Danielson's Framework of Teaching to use when conducting informal observations. Administration observes and provides appropriate feedback, thereby creating targeted pedagogical support for better student performance as evidenced in the state middle school examinations where the school went up 12 percentage points in English language arts and 8 percentage points in math.
  - In November, teachers were given a survey where they rated their teaching ability based on Danielson's Framework for Teaching. Administrators will be analyzing the data to see the major areas of support in order to create professional development opportunities as well as looking for potential lead teachers for the department. It is hoped that

the differentiated workshops will provide meaningful opportunities for teachers to improve instructional practices and, thus, become more successful instructors.

- Teachers collaborate to examine student work, plan together to share ideas and best practices in an effort to improve student outcomes. (4.2)
  - Through the school's common prep scheduling a majority of teachers meet collaboratively within their grade more than once a week. The school also has vertical teams by department for teachers to examine curricula throughout the grades in relationship to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) in an effort to ensure coherence and consistency across all grades throughout the school.
  - Using data from observation reports as well as the data from the state's Teacher Effectiveness Data Report, the principal has appointed lead teachers to provide workshops on various curriculum areas as well as turn-key information from various Network meetings. Key teachers also informally consult with administration in decisions regarding school wide matters. By consulting with administration and giving their perspective on various school matters, these teachers are helping to build leadership capacity within the school.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Develop coherence and alignment in the school's curricula with the CCLS to ensure that all students make progress in their learning. (1.1)
  - The principal scheduled department teams to meet more than once a week to plan curriculum maps in an effort to ensure vertical alignment of the CCLS and to provide cohesiveness within the department. Despite the fact that one of the recommendations of the previous Quality Review was "develop coherence and rigor in the school's curriculum tasks with the CCLS to ensure that all students make progress in their learning," teachers rely on previous statewide examinations as the basis for their curriculum, which is not aligned to the CCLS. Additionally, even though teachers prepared curriculum maps, they do not adhere to the Citywide Instructional Expectations. This lack of alignment to key State standards results in the absence of rigorous curriculum that challenges students' thinking, thereby hindering academic growth.
  - It is the principal's expectations for all classes to plan for tasks that engage students in higher level thinking as well as differentiation according to students' ability levels. Even though the school's total student population includes 3 percent English language learners, the academic tasks observed in classrooms that were being implemented by those students did not show diversity. All students were involved in the same task with no evidence of scaffolding for these learners. These classroom opportunities do not ensure that all students are engaged and their needs are not being met, which hampers students' ability to fully participate in instruction and limits their potential for academic growth. (b)

- Extend the good practice of using accurate formative assessments to differentiate learning activities and to promote rigor and challenge into classes. (1.2)
  - Individual teachers and teacher teams plan differentiated lessons using student data but effective implementation of these lessons was not consistent or always effective. Although in virtually all classes observed there were cluster of students for small group instruction, lessons did not consistently reflect differentiation of modalities or a wide range of learning opportunities. The same basic activity was provided to all students, thereby limiting entry points for students in the curriculum and the opportunity for students to provide differentiated work products that demonstrate higher levels of thinking.
  - During teacher meetings and professional development sessions the staff is working on how they can improve student critical thinking skills through questioning and academic tasks. While students are well-behaved and actively engaged, in most classrooms observed the in-class questioning, engagement and work products demonstrated low levels of rigor. Teachers primarily asked students lower-level recall questions, which did not encourage student discussion or engagement. Because pedagogy is inconsistent, the current strategies are not consistently setting a path towards mastery of skill and content for all groups of students.
- Develop a cohesive system to ensure that all teachers know their individual student's needs, strengths and learning styles on an ongoing basis to support targeted instruction and foster task engagement. (2.2)
  - Even though teachers use rubrics for major student projects, teachers are using the rubrics from previous state examinations; they vary from department-to-department and are not set to the same scale. Depending on the subject, the rubrics could either be on a four, five or six point scale. Additionally, the rubrics are not aligned to the new state CCLS and no revision to those rubrics have been made by teacher teams. This lack of coherence in rubrics prevents teachers from gleaning meaningful information on instructional practice in the department, which could further inform instruction that more fully engages students in the learning process.
  - The principal mentioned that teachers were using various types of questioning and exit tickets to assess student comprehension. However, in classrooms observed there was an inconsistency of teachers using checks for understanding and no evidence of student self-reflection. This lack of coherence in assessment practices inhibits grade-wide teacher teams and individual teachers from identifying more granular strengths and needs of students in order to improve learning outcomes.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Young Women's Leadership School, Queens	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score	X						
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?	X						
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?	X						
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?		X					
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?	X						
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?	X						
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?	X						
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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 <b>inquiry approach</b> that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?		X					
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?	X						
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed