



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

**Quality Review  
Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning  
2013-2014**

# **Quality Review Report 2013-2014**

**The Young Womens Leadership School of Queens**

**Secondary School Q896**

**159-91 87<sup>th</sup> Road  
Queens  
NY 11432**

**Principal: Mala Panday**

**Dates of review: March 12 - 13, 2014**

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

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Young Womens Leadership School of Queens is a secondary school with 522 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 55% Black, 18% Hispanic, 2% White, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native and 24% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 0% of the students enrolled and girls account for 100%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 93.2%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school culture reflects a commitment to student voice, inclusivity and extracurricular activities, all of which are highly appreciated by the school community and result in students' personal and academic development. (1.4)
  - Student voice is honored at the school, particularly in the formation of clubs, where if students have an idea and obtain twenty signatures, the club is formed. As a result, the number of afterschool activities has increased from four to sixteen since the previous year. There is also an active student government with representatives from each grade that drafted the school's constitution and honor code. They survey students about which social issues they would like to focus on for community service projects and plan the various Spirit Days to promote student unity. Additionally, the school, based on parental feedback at a safety meeting, has remodeled the weekly detention program to promote students' self-awareness, help them to understand and respect the rights of others, and increase their ability to relate to their peers, teachers and other adults. The administrators work to survey students, teachers and parents on ideas for new programs that support improved communication, a goal identified in their school improvement plan. Students shared that they take pride in joining various clubs, attending college trips, enrolling in on-site SAT programs and openly sharing their opinions with their advisors and student government grade representatives. The principal has worked with the parent coordinator to spearhead an open door policy as well as opportunities for parents to visit the school each Friday for updates and collect any missed workshop information. Parents meet with the principal for each Executive Board meeting to share ideas and plan events that speak to higher levels of family engagement and involvement. Finally, the principal scheduled morning meetings at the beginning of the school day that encourage students to speak publicly to teachers and their peers about important issues facing the school and to celebrate efforts. This results in an environment that supports the needs of the students, which cultivates school pride and an interest in learning. An additional contact person monitors students enrolled in extracurricular activities, ensuring that they are meeting standards as well as connecting to another adult in the school. This staff person also supports goal setting for students and parental contact to encourage parents to provide additional support for credit accumulation.
  - After realizing the initial advisory program lacked focus and did not meet the needs of a single-gender school setting, the principal worked with the Young Women's Leadership Network to pilot Respect 360. This program is aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), promotes self-respect and raises awareness of issues facing young women. All middle school teachers and the four advisory teachers were provided ongoing professional development to support the program's implementation. Teachers report that students are able to independently set goals and have an improved vision of their future and how they want to impact the world. Another benefit of this program, supported by Harvard research, suggests that the students are better able to handle

stress by managing the completion of projects, assignments and preparation for exams. In addition, the guidance counselor reports fewer visits to her office regarding situations that are connected to lack of respect, low self-esteem and fewer detentions and suspensions related to aggression. The principal has increased the number of advisory hours, leading to many improvements including increased retention, as double the number of grade 8 students are slated to return as compared to the previous year. Respect 360 also highlights the Leadership and Early College and Career Readiness pillars of the school. For example, students have met with author and activist Lydia Cacho, participated in New Rochelle's Junior Jumpstart to College program and in Bloomberg's International Women's Day. When one advisory teacher surveyed grades 9, 10 and 11, students shared that they feel more able to focus on academics and more confident about identifying areas that require support from an adult or peer.

- The school maintains a supportive learning environment where the principal conveys high expectations to students and parents and this positively impacts student achievement. (3.4)
  - The TALENT team, comprised of the principal, assistant principal and eight teachers, met for two weeks during the summer and continue to meet twice a month, to craft a new vision for unified instruction that addresses the deficits presented in the 2012-2013 Progress Report, Quality Review and School Survey. The TALENT team is divided into three focus teams that create hypotheses and set action plans to establish a first-year practice that follows the theory of accomplishing easy tasks that will have a high impact. The core beliefs embedded in trainings for staff include speaking up, taking risks and professional reflection. Their vision, which states, "All learning environments will embrace student centered opportunities and engage students in a variety of challenging activities that allow them to lead the work," is posted throughout the building and involves teacher-developed action plans for materializing this vision in classrooms. The team is also committed to tracking the three school-wide goals they have set: improving communication, increasing parent engagement and creating student-centered learning opportunities. The team has initiated the development of the school's online newsletter linked to the school website which has more than 10,000 unique hits, and increased parent workshops and events such as a Multicultural Dinner and a CCLS workshop. The principal partnered with New Visions to provide ongoing professional development opportunities and a retreat in the fall. A coach models effective strategies and protocols to improve communication and to build trust. One-to-one customized teacher professional development ensures a shared commitment to the school's high expectations and goals.
  - Statistics from the 2012-2013 School Survey revealed a lack of communication from the school regarding students' achievements, successes, and supplemental services. In response, the principal diligently worked with various members of the TALENT team to administer surveys to parents and faculty to assess progress toward improved communication, with the goal that it will impact student learning as well as increase awareness of the different support personnel in the school. For example, the parent coordinator created a new monthly newsletter that includes updates from the assistant principal and the

director of college counseling. The dean and the guidance counselors also send out updates on current data and upcoming initiatives, and the principal launched an electronic, school-wide calendar that is available that is shared in the principal's newsletter and on the school website. The principal also revised the parent-teacher conference format so that teachers sit together in one section to make the process more efficient. The detention model has been revamped to allow students to reengage with the four Pillars of Health and Wellness, Leadership, Early College and College Awareness and STEM. When decisions are made regarding the punitive measures, these pillars are anchor discussion points to redirect and support positive student behaviors. As a result, there is consistency of information shared because those who initiate parent outreach know and share the same information on the expectations and their role in assisting their children to advance.

- The principal is proactive in identifying additional funding sources and makes effective decisions around instruction, leading to improved student work products school-wide. (1.3)
  - In response to the 2012-2013 Progress Reports where the school earned an "F" and a "D" in Environment, the principal made policies and practices more collaborative among students, staff and families. To foster easier communication, the offices for guidance counselors, the parent coordinator and the director of college counseling were moved to be in closer proximity to one another. The principal also hired a business manager, a part-time payroll secretary and a community assistant to manage the school inventory. These key staffing decisions support the school's instructional goals by ensuring that communication among all constituencies are fluid and they help to increase parental engagement. For example, the business manager supports the principal with parent workshops while the community assistant teaches with the physical education teacher on the girl's track team, helping them to win numerous honors including competing in the Penn Relays. The community assistant also has an excellent rapport with the school's athletes and their families, attending Parent Teacher Association meetings and supporting the director of college counseling during the college application process. Since hiring the community associate, student grade point averages and parent satisfaction have increased. The students and their coach have served as an inspiration for the creation of a new middle school track team, basketball team, and cheerleading club, and each group has clear academic criteria that must be maintained for participation. The sports initiative speaks directly to the school's Health & Wellness pillar and also engages girls in new sports leadership opportunities.
  - Due to last year's results on the state math test, the principal hired a retired math staff developer to work two days a week to help teachers align their lesson and unit plans either to the Connected Mathematics Project (CMP3) curriculum, EngageNY or the CCLS. She leads weekly department meetings, provides professional development and models effective instructional strategies. Teachers have time to collaborate with their department members to plan vertically, choose materials and review student work. As part of the core inquiry TALENT team, the principal has also added two to three additional math periods for grade 6 and 8 students, designed as labs, to address needs for students with disabilities and those who were Level 1 or 2 on the previous year's assessment. In

addition, the principal hired an additional part time trigonometry teacher to increase the school's Regents pass rate and to prepare students for college readiness. She also hired two literacy coaches to assist teachers in revising their unit plans to align to the CCLS, reflect multiple entry points and include a range of assessments, both formative and summative. All of these initiatives have deepened the level of instruction and have positively impacted teacher practice and student achievement, as evidenced by the Integrated Algebra courses showing a 3% increase in pass rate between the second and third marking periods. For the trigonometry courses, students raised the pass rate by 16% between marking periods three and four. Finally, the grade 6 integrated co-teaching class increased its pass rate by 9% from the second marking period the fourth marking period.

- Students benefit from a rigorous, standards-based curriculum that facilitates students' ownership of learning. (1.1)
  - Based on the recommendation of the 2012-2013 Quality Review and with the support of the New Vision coaches, the school has established a school-wide unit plan template, based on the research of Wiggins, Grant and McTighe, that focuses instruction to provide a clear path to college and career readiness. The template is designed to improve rigor via its CCLS alignment, Tier II vocabulary words with a variety of resources and entry points for learners. Within the template there is also a clear emphasis on supporting students with disabilities and connecting the content to the Four Pillars: Leadership, STEM, College Bound and Health & Wellness. Students are faced with performance tasks and rubrics from the EngageNY website that connect them to the real world as they are given clear expectations and standards of success. The unit planning template has a specific section that connects the focus study to the Early College and Career Awareness pillar. Teachers focus on providing students with various media to enhance 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The principal regularly reviews unit plans, checking to see if the instructional shifts are incorporated. Additionally, all middle school students are exposed at an early grade level to a technology course, with a licensed technology teacher to prepare them for opportunities within the STEM fields. This builds instruction coherence and consistency school wide.
  - Teachers commonly follow the workshop model for their lesson structure, and there is a school-wide focus on using the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) wheel to plan more open ended and critical thinking questions, allowing for more opportunities for student-centered lessons. The widespread use of the workshop model and DOK allows for higher order thinking skills, as teachers use both to stimulate independent thinking and problem solving strategies. Teachers group students based on reading levels and formative assessments. In addition, the principal sent special education teachers to professional development at the Network to create functional behavior plans that coincide with the school's unit plans. As supervisors track the quality of questions that students and teachers are asking and answering via the Danielson Rubric, reports indicate a gradual shift away from low-level questions. Students report that they feel more involved in their learning and are performing better on the assessments, as per teacher scholarship reports. This enables all students to participate in challenging work that elevates their critical thinking skills, leading to increased student performance.

## What the school needs to improve

- Promote greater consistency in differentiated instruction based on data so that lesson planning reflects purposeful groupings, students are challenged and questioning extends thinking to maximize student learning. (1.2)
  - The principal purchased timers for teachers to monitor and self-regulate the amount of teacher talk during lessons. Her intent was to raise teachers' awareness regarding the number of minutes they are talking to students versus the number of minutes students are engaged in differentiated, student-centered, rigorous tasks. Although there was evidence of scaffolding of instruction providing students with multiple entry points into the curricula in most classrooms observed, there are inconsistencies across classes regarding how teachers use access points to scaffold instruction so that all students reach their intended learning targets. Thus, the current strategies are not setting a path towards mastery of skill and content for all groups of students.
  - Students were well behaved and actively engaged in most classrooms observed, such as in one grade 7 science class where students were creating their own experiments about how sound travels using a tuning fork. However, many assigned tasks observed did not necessarily produce meaningful work products and were inconsistent across grades and content areas. Because pedagogy is inconsistent, some students experience lessons that push their thinking and others do not, limiting growth for all students.
- Establish a systematic approach to data processes regarding student achievement so that patterns and trends can be easily identified in order to accelerate timely action and propel student growth. (2.2)
  - At the TALENT team meeting, teachers were analyzing students' argumentative writing samples to evaluate student growth for their inquiry focus on those students who are in the lowest third based on state assessments, holdover and special education students. However, the lack of common rubrics, especially in writing, where rubrics range from two points in some classes to four points in others, limits the reliability of the data and the ability of teachers to identify successful strategies for supporting student growth. This also limits students' ability to understand their own achievement and areas for improvement.
  - Almost one-third of the staff is engaged in data inquiry and analysis of the school's bottom-third students in literacy, based on the state examination results in grades 6, 8, and 11. They meet regularly to examine the deficiencies, look at student work and discuss next steps. However, there is not a specified school protocol or common assessment that enables teams to uniformly analyze the work of students across grades and content areas. Consequently, the school is not developing a clear picture for how to target individual students or subgroups for specifically identified academic interventions.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Young Womens Leadership School of Queens	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			X				
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?			X				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the 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 supports 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 those expectations?				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 student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			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					
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