



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Young Women's Leadership School

Middle School - High School M610

**105 East 106th Street
Manhattan
NY 10029**

Principal: Althea Bradshaw-Tyson

**Date of review: April 29, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Richard Cintron**

The School Context

Young Women's Leadership School is a middle school – high school with 300 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 33% Black, 54% Hispanic, 3% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 0% of the students enrolled and girls account for 100%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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	Focus	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Celebration	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Leadership and staff effectively communicate high expectations to families to support student progress towards high expectations connected to college and career readiness. The school has established a culture that provides all students, including high-need subgroups, with clearly focused and effective feedback and guidance that prepare students for the next level.

Impact

Staff takes ownership for creating true partnerships with parents that result in increased student achievement towards stated expectations. Students are motivated to own their own educational experience and support their peers so that they are prepared for college and career decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has a very detailed professional development calendar that the school based staff development committee collaboratively created that is aligned to the school's instructional focus and school-wide goals. Topics include creating individual teacher goals aligned to the instructional focus, what constitutes evidence of rigor, best practices from Teachers College writing model, and aligning baseline, benchmark, and final assessments. Teacher leaders frequently facilitate or co-facilitate with the administration and regularly add new topics relevant to best practices to further support teacher growth. The principal spoke to how this collaborative process has helped strengthen each teacher's individual abilities to implement the school's instructional focus, and has helped to support teacher teams with their goals that are also connected to the school's instructional focus.
- Students were asked how they knew they were ready for the next grade. In addition to explaining how they have the opportunity to take rigorous courses such as Advanced Placement and honor courses, they spoke to how the regular conversations they have with staff members have helped them grow and mature and they are ready to take on any challenges that they might face. One student spoke to how her experiences have helped to create a growth mindset within her and helped her to want to seek out challenges and not be afraid of failure. A second student spoke to how she knew she was ready for the next stage in her education when she was able to articulate what was in her mind through writing and when she saw that her writing created an identity that other students could relate to.
- The principal explained that the school has a partnership with the College Bound Initiative and has a full time college counselor who works very closely with students and parents to ensure they understand the entire college application process. Students indicated that they begin learning about and visiting colleges as early as grade 6 and college and career exploration is a regular conversation that happens both formally and informally among all staff members, students, and parents. Teachers, parents and students all spoke about how past graduates regularly return to the school to speak to students in all grades about their experiences in college and to encourage and support students with pushing themselves to own their educational experience. A review of the school's High School Quality Snapshot revealed that in addition to the school's graduation rate of 100%, the school's four-year college readiness index, four year weighted diploma rate, and postsecondary enrollment rate after six months have all increased steadily for the past three years.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Teachers create assessments and use rubrics aligned to the school curricula that provide students with actionable feedback. Teachers regularly check for understanding and use the information to make instructional adjustments.

Impact

The monitoring of student progress at the teacher team and classroom levels as well as the regular use of checks for understanding allow teachers to determine student progress towards goals and adjust instruction accordingly to meet the needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The use of rubrics accompanied by specific targeted actionable feedback from teachers to students is an established ritual for improving student achievement across the school that the principal, teachers and students discussed. Students spoke to how they regularly use rubrics in class and with homework assignments and how teachers confer with them to provide targeted feedback to improve their writing. Students also spoke to how they use rubrics during in-class writing assignments to peer and self-assess, and how this process has helped them to understand their strengths and next steps toward improving their writing. Currently, the school does not yet have a system and structure in place to monitor the feedback given to students by teachers and as such, the depth of next steps to students varies across grades and subject areas.
- In observed classrooms, teachers consistently used a variety of methods to check for understanding, such as exit slips, one-on-one conferencing with individual students as well as groups of students, and purposeful questioning. In a grade 9 algebra class the teacher conferenced with all groups, asked targeted questions to specific students to ensure that they understood the task, and recorded students' responses as she moved from group to group. In a grade 6 social studies class, while students were engaged in a debate using evidence from a variety of documents to defend their positions, the teacher kept track of student responses that were engaged in the discussion and checked in with students who were not to ensure they were on task.
- Across classrooms, teachers consistently asked students to peer and self assess their own work and the work of their partners. In a grade 12 government and politics class, students worked collaboratively using paragraph and debate rubrics to assess their own and their partner's written work and to assess both of their performances during the in-class debate. In a grade 10 English language arts (ELA) class, students peer edited their partner's writing and left feedback for each other using Google docs.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Teachers coherently emphasize higher order skills in curricula and tasks.

Impact

All students, including English language learners (ELLs), students with disabilities and higher achieving learners consistently engage in higher level tasks across grades and content areas, are required to demonstrate their thinking, and are provided with the necessary supports to access those tasks leading to college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers use school created templates for unit and lesson plans and a process is in place for teachers to peer review all teacher work products. Unit and lesson plans ask teachers to identify Common Core Learning Standards, essential questions, content and skill objectives, key vocabulary, assessments used during the lesson, and multiple entry points for struggling students. Teachers work together in grade and content teams to develop teacher work products and share them through the school's online community. Teachers receive feedback electronically so they can make immediate modifications and so that the administration can support teacher teams and individual teachers with creating future work products and providing feedback to peers. The principal shared evidence of teacher work products across all content areas that had received feedback and been implemented to ensure alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards, as well as the school's instructional focus.
- Lesson plans across all content areas revealed that tasks consistently emphasize higher order thinking skills such as citing evidence, developing logical arguments, analyzing information from multiple sources, and applying concepts in real world situations. A grade 12 government and politics lesson plan required students to work collaboratively with a partner to support a claim with evidence from multiple sources regarding the legalization of prostitution and human trafficking, and then participate in a debate to defend their positions. In a grade 6 social studies lesson plan, students were required to evaluate and analyze evidence from multiple sources to formulate a claim on whether or not Qin Shi Huang Di was justified in his actions as emperor.
- A review of written lesson plans across all content areas revealed numerous scaffolds and entry points such as the use of graphic organizers, purposeful grouping, differentiated tasks, flexible use of time, one to one conferencing, student choice, and the identification of key vocabulary so that all learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, could demonstrate their thinking. A grade 11 ELA lesson planned for students to choose their literature circle role based on their interests and strengths. A grade 7 science lesson included leveled texts and instructions presented to students both verbally and in writing. A grade 6 science lesson used the Kagan Method of cooperative learning to ensure that all students' points of view were heard.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best. Student discussions and work products reflect high levels of student thinking, participation and ownership.

Impact

In the vast majority of classrooms, all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, are motivated and actively engaged in classroom activities and discussions, resulting in their production of meaningful work products that prepare them for college and careers.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher practices aligned to the school's belief that students learn best when they take ownership of their own learning, were consistently evident in the vast majority of classrooms. Students were consistently given choices such as selecting their position on particular topics for debate, in selecting their partners with whom they wished to work with on particular assignments, in selecting their roles during collaborative learning tasks, and in selecting which evidence they believed best supported their arguments from a variety of sources. Teachers also assigned students the responsibility of seeking out additional information related to topics covered during class time and to bring this knowledge to class to deepen classroom conversations. Finally, in the vast majority of classrooms visited, teachers connected learning experiences to real-world situations that affected women so that the students could make deeper connections to the covered material. During a meeting with teachers, several teachers spoke about how they regularly speak to students about being proactive and owning their own education and how they purposefully plan lessons at all grade levels that allow students to experience this sense of ownership and responsibility.
- In the vast majority of classrooms visited, teachers used a variety of strategies to ensure students' demonstration of higher-order thinking skills. Across all classrooms, teachers regularly asked questions of the class and then had the students turn and talk to their partner and then be prepared to explain their partner's answer. In all classrooms visited, students regularly used accountable talk and referenced evidence from a variety of sources to defend their ideas. In rare cases where students did not use evidence to support their ideas, other students reminded them.
- When asked, the vast majority of students could articulate what they were learning and why it was important. In a grade 10 ELA class where students were learning about how to improve their peer editing skills, students explained how these skills would not only strengthen their ability to provide accurate feedback to their peers, but would also help them to develop into stronger writers which would eventually help them when they went to college or into a career. Students in a grade 12 government class explained how learning to defend their claims with evidence and participating in debates about real-world issues that affect women such as whether or not to legalize prostitution would help them to develop skills that they would use in college. They also would help them to develop into community leaders with an understanding of key issues that all women face.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

All teachers consistently examine teacher practice and analyze student data within structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Distributed teacher leadership is embedded across all areas of the school.

Impact

School-wide coherence that strengthens teacher instructional capacity and promotes the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards is evident throughout all classrooms. Teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect teaching and learning across the school, leading to increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers articulated how in addition to their own individual goals, teacher teams have goals that are connected to the school-wide instructional focus of improving student writing. As teams work together throughout the year, they create instructional strategies aligned to these goals and share best practices at whole-school professional development sessions. Social studies teachers have created a common rubric and graphic organizer used for argumentative writing assignments for middle and high school. All grade 6 through 12 social studies teachers use these common teacher work products for argumentative writing assignments and regularly analyze all student work to adjust unit and lesson plans. ELA teachers have developed samples of model papers for all major writing assignments across grades and have shared them with students to show how their writing should be progressing. All middle school teachers have developed a common method of teaching students how to use evidence from various sources to defend their verbal and written arguments.
- All teachers serve on grade and content level teams that meet regularly during the day. In addition to the scheduled meetings, the vast majority of teachers also meet during common prep periods or communicate using Google docs to share teacher work products, receive and give feedback to their team members, and to discuss supports for targeted students. Teachers spoke about how these collaborations are the norm and how they hold each other and teachers new to the school accountable for maintaining this culture.
- During two teacher team meetings, teachers spoke about how they have a strong pro-active voice in school-wide instructional decisions and that their leadership is not only valued but also actively sought. Teachers collaboratively worked with the administration to increase the number of days each week that teacher teams set aside to meet with parents and redesigned the role that advisors would play in those meetings. Teachers spoke about their current work to create interdisciplinary units across all grades for implementation next school year. The math teachers spoke to how they were the driving force behind deciding to use new curricula for algebra and geometry as well as working with the administration to create three additional periods during the day for all students in middle school to receive additional support or enrichment in math. The principal explained that the school has a strong teacher inter-visitation program that is entirely teacher led with administrators joining in the walks as observers. During both teacher meetings, teachers spoke to how these visits have been instrumental in helping to improve their practice and to create accountability across the school.