



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Young Women's Leadership

High School Q286

**23-15 Newtown Avenue
Queens
NY 11102**

Principal: Lisa Lauritzen

**Date of review: April 20, 2015
Lead Reviewer: William Fahey**

The School Context

Young Women's Leadership Academy is a high school with 569 students from grade six through grade twelve. The school population comprises 6% Black, 41% Hispanic, 18% White, 32% Asian students and 3%. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 4% 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 96.4%.

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	Proficient
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	Focus	Developing
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	Additional Findings	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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers across the school are engaged in examining student work and assessment data of all students within structured, inquiry-based collaborations. Teachers across subject areas and grades share inquiry findings and support Common Core alignment.

Impact

The school's professional collaborations foster reflection, enhance the instructional capacity of teachers and contribute to effective instructional strategies that focus on improving student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Department teacher teams engage in structured inquiry-based collaborations that consistently analyze student work products to make curricular adjustments and strengthen teacher practice. Teachers use anchor papers and a descriptive assessment rubric to discuss how student work samples meet or exceed the Common Core Standards. Teachers develop a common language, provide quality feedback to improve students' learning outcomes and discuss next steps for students' learning.
- Department teams meet to examine curriculum and pacing calendars. Teachers across grades work together examining the content and skills taught in each grade to create a staircase of complexity that ensures vertical alignment. Teachers across content areas meet with literacy teachers every Wednesday morning to discuss literacy strategies and vocabulary that are being taught so as to ensure understanding among colleagues allowing them to incorporate into their lessons. For example, literacy teachers worked together to develop a shared understanding and expectations for "citing evidence from text". The literacy teachers explained when students should use paraphrasing and when students should use direct quotes.
- The social studies team examined the grade 6 unit on the trade routes and used the language of questions from Measure of Student Learning (MOSL) exams to develop multiple choice questions for the unit exam on "Trade Routes". As a result, there has been an increase in student achievement on multiple choice questions as measured by comparing the interim social studies MOSL benchmarks against the baseline MOSL assessments.
- Teachers shared their reflection and learning from looking at student work and analyzing patterns and trends of data. One teacher stated, "We realized when doing analysis of student data from the Regents exams that students did not do as well with certain topics, such as the Spanish American War. When we went back to the pacing calendar, we realized we spent less time on this topic and more on topics and skills students were not tested on. From this information, it made us realize that we need to use baseline assessments at the beginning of each unit to compact and adjust curriculum based on the identified patterns and trends."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Teachers are beginning to improve pedagogical practices to meet the needs of students and integrate the school's belief about how students learn best.

Impact

Across classrooms, teachers inconsistently provide multiple entry points, thus limiting opportunities for all learners to be appropriately engaged or demonstrate higher order thinking skills in their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's belief is that students learn best when they are engaged in real-world learning tasks where they are required to use 21st century skills to complete challenging and rigorous work at their own pace and with multiple opportunities to prove their mastery. Although learning tasks were aligned to real-world application, they inconsistently reflected the use of 21st century skills and did not consistently provide opportunities to support or extend student learning. For example, students in a science class worked in groups to present models and used tri-fold boards for a trial run of their final presentations on analyzing the earth, sun and moon system to describe cyclic patterns of lunar phases, eclipses and seasons. As one group of students presented to another group of students, there were missed opportunities to support or extend student learning through the use of focus or facilitative questions to promote higher order thinking skills in students' final work products or feedback.
- Across the school, lessons did not consistently provide multiple entry points for all learners, especially students with disabilities, English language learners and higher performing students. In one seventh grade math class, some students struggled in understanding polynomials and were not provided with supports. In a ninth grade Global History class there were missed opportunities to challenge higher performing students whom already answered the essential question, "How effective was the Feudal class system in organizing European society?"
- Some teachers use iZone with higher performing students, allowing them to be challenged within their zone of proximal development. This also allows teachers time to work more closely with other students that are struggling and require additional support. While this practice provides multiple entry points and differentiated supports to some students, it is not an embedded practice across the school which limits the impact on the progress of students across the school.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure alignment to the Common Core and/or content standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills across grades and subjects.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions are coherent, promote college and career readiness and provide opportunities for student thinking across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use data from the Common Core Learning Standards, New York State Assessments and student work to develop and refine curricula. The middle grades use Teachers College Reading and Writing Project curriculum resource for English language arts and the Connected Mathematics Program Three for math. For high school grades, teachers use the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and 21st century learning skills to adapt New York State and Engage NY curricula. This year, based on data from the two graduating classes, teachers in grades 6 through 12 worked in vertical grade meetings to build coherence and ensure a staircase of complexity of skills from grade to grade. For example, the humanities department gathered expectations and skill descriptions from rubrics to vertically align and more effectively spiral and increase expectations for argument for grades 6 through 12. The spiraling allows students at least three opportunities for students to master content and/or skills.
- Curriculum maps and lesson plans integrate literacy and instructional shifts across curricula. For example, eighth grade curriculum maps in humanities, math and science contained the literacy skill of analyzing documents from multiple sources with conflicting arguments and evaluating how each source presents and interprets the topic or subject in order for students to form their own point of view on the topic and use appropriate evidence to support it. This strategic and purposeful approach develops students' critical thinking and promotes college and career readiness.
- Some teachers have created asynchronous units with iZone that align with unit topics and provide personalized learning for individual students. It allows students to study curriculum at a deeper level and make real world connections and applications. For example, a student researched and investigated the evolution and impact of women and equality during the 20th century to create a documentary film with a message for social action.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subjects. Across classrooms, teachers use common assessments and develop rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula.

Impact

These assessment practices provide students with clear expectations for improving and results are used to adjust curricula and instruction. Students are provided multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers in grades 6 through 12 met to develop a mastery-based grading policy that makes grading transparent and outcomes-based. Teachers compared the traditional grading policy to a standards-based grading policy by reflecting on the following questions: "How is a course defined?"; "How are tasks designed to assess progress?"; "How are grades calculated?"; "What happens if a student does not pass?" Once accepted by the entire staff, this grading policy was presented to students and families.
- At the high school level, teachers used data from the January Regents to plan instructional interventions for individual students. For example, teachers on the social studies inquiry team focused on students that did not meet the passing rate on the January Global History Regents' exam. After analyzing the data, it was noticed that these students had difficulty in writing a thematic essay. As a result, teachers have developed lessons to explicitly teach this skill and are offering special tutoring sessions to students who did not pass in January due to this skill deficiency. In addition, teachers have incorporated thematic essays into the grades 9 and 10 Global History classes.
- The school uses rubrics and *Jump Rope*, an on-line grading system, to make grading transparent and immediate to students and their families. In the student interviews, one student stated teachers provide rubric and outcomes to help you move from "Meeting Standards" to "Exceeding Standards". Another student stated, "I log into *Jump Rope* and see grades on projects, quizzes and tests. I know what things I need to work on to meet the course requirements.
- Students post work to Google docs, allowing peers and teachers to provide feedback. One student stated, "After posting my work I get feedback from my classmates. Teachers use this along with exit slips to assess student understanding at the end of lessons. Across the school, teachers use this type of formative assessments to assess student understanding and use as an entry point into the next lesson. For example, a teacher stated, "I noticed students having difficulty understanding the main idea in a complex text using their annotated notes. As a result, I back-tracked and re-taught the main idea with an emphasis on choosing the strongest piece of evidence to support their argument."

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school consistently conveys high expectations that promote student learning for college and career readiness, parental involvement and achievement toward student and school goals.

Impact

The school has partnered with families to support student progress toward high expectations resulting in students owning their educational experiences so they are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The school offers a summer bridge program that is a one week orientation program for all new students that will be attending the school each September. Over the course of the week students are familiarized with the school’s history, culture, teachers, courses, credit accumulation, hear experiences from upper classmates and visit a college. One student stated, “Visiting a college campus during my freshman year made me think college was really possible and it made me work toward that goal. This September, I will be attending Long Island University in Brooklyn.”
- School leaders and teachers meet with students and parents to communicate the college and career expectation that students must receive a grade of 80 or higher on the Math regents or a 75 or higher on the English regents or they will be expected to re-take the exam(s). This was communicated at parent grade meetings, Parent Association meetings and individual meetings with students and parents. At these meetings, the rationale of how increased scores would benefit students was explained. Every parent is required to attend College Financial Aid workshops. Additionally, the importance of attending student-led conferences twice a year is communicated with families which have resulted in a high rate of parent participation and engagement with attendance over 80%.
- The first Thursday of each month, the principal has a “Morning Coffee Chat with the Principal”. It is an informal gathering where parents can drop by the school without an appointment to discuss any questions or concerns they have. Parents stated, “The principal and assistant principal are open to communication. This year they have been sending notices to us on paper in multiple languages, via phone and e-mail. One sixth grade parent stated, “My daughter struggled in math. When I spoke with the teacher she scheduled my daughter to go for tutoring sessions with her after school. Now my daughter understands and is doing much better. Now she is more confident in math.”
- In partnership with Mercy College, the school offers three advanced placement courses for students in grade 12: US History, Algebra and Statistics. Teachers received certification to teach these college-level courses. This year the school also developed a partnership with College Now and seniors are now able to attend City University of New York afterschool to earn additional college credit. This year approximately twenty students are participating. In the middle school, Regents’ courses are not offered to eighth grade students. Offering advanced level courses, limits challenges for students and further college and career readiness opportunities.