



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**Jonathan Levin High School for Media and
Communications**

High School X414

**240 East 172nd Street
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: Jacqueline Boswell

**Date of review: May 21, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Carron Staple**

The School Context

Jonathan Levin High School for Media and Communications is a high school with 160 students from grade 11 through grade 12. The school population comprises 21% Black, 77% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 46% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 60% of the students enrolled and girls account for 40%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 74.8%.

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	Developing
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	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	Additional Findings	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations and provide staff training connected to the competencies of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Communication is provided to students and their families that is connected to a path of college and career readiness.

Impact

Professional collaborations, training, and post-observation feedback from administrators has led to a system of accountability around professionalism, instruction and communication. Ongoing feedback from school leaders and support staff helps students and their families understand their progress toward meeting school-wide expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders provide support through frequent cycles of observation and feedback to support the schools focus on improving pedagogy. School leaders norm and calibrate class observation data with each other and share expectations for class visits that may be informal or formal. Multiple rounds of observations are conducted where teachers receive feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework, with timely next steps for improvement. Best practices are shared among the staff to support the needs of teachers and the increased achievement of all learners.
- Conversations with parents revealed that the school provides them with clear detailed information regarding their child's progress via email, phone, letters home, progress reports, monthly newsletters and parent meetings connected to school expectations, common core, graduation requirements, and college support. Students reported that their new principal was very involved with them providing multiple academic, cultural and college trips more than they have ever experienced. Additionally, all students discussed using a wide variety of rubrics this year to support their performance tasks and other assignments.
- During a student meeting, students spoke about how teachers and counselors have been very supportive of them and have pushed them to work harder to improve their grades so that they can be college-ready. Three students commented on the difference in teaching style this year, stating it had improved and allowed them to do more hands-on activities and rigorous tasks such as a research project. This school year all students were required to write research papers in all core classes, which they stated made them feel very prepared and college-ready.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, pedagogical practices inconsistently reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best. There is uneven student engagement and opportunities for students to demonstrate high level thinking or work products.

Impact

Implementation of the school's instructional beliefs across classrooms is inconsistent, which leads to varying levels of alignment to the curricula and the instructional shifts. As a result, in some classrooms students are not engaged in appropriately challenging tasks or discussions that lead to high-level thinking and meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's instructional focus is centered on every student engaging in rigorous and meaningful work that supports college and career readiness. However, impact of this focus has not yet reached most classrooms visited. In a US History class, the teacher asked the students, "How do they make things faster in factories?" No one answers. She then tell the students about the history of the assembly line without pushing students' thinking and the connection between Progressivism and her questions. Next she asks, "What process do they use at a car factory?" One student says they make engines while other students sit disengaged with no attempts at responding. The teacher continues to lecture without redirecting her focus back to the lesson objective significantly limiting students' opportunities to participate in the lesson or demonstrate their understanding.
- Across classrooms, there was uneven student engagement during discussions. Teachers posed questions verbally to the entire class and relied on volunteers to respond creating an environment where only a few students participated while others were allowed to disengage. In some classrooms, students worked independently, although teachers requested them to work in pairs, again limiting opportunities for students to work together to share ideas and push each other's thinking.
- Student work products do not consistently reflect high levels of thinking and participation. In an algebra class, students who presented a low level task on range, median and mode, were not respected by some of their peers who talked during their share, thus further limiting engagement. Although the teacher's lesson plan delineated multiple scaffolds and differentiation, there was no evidence of either strategy being used, as all students had the same task which was to define range, median and mode and present as a group to the class.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Curricula is aligned to Common Core learning, and content standards are consistently emphasized across grades and subjects.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Unit plans in all subject areas are revised as part of a continuous cycle of work within the eleventh and twelfth grade teams, and reflect a backward design model. Embedded with tasks, all units are aligned to common core content and writing standards. For example, English department units reflected reading and writing choices that were aligned with the grade level recommendations from Engage NY. The units contained writing tasks that asked students to infer, cite evidence and frame arguments, and also contained supports such as graphic organizers and rubrics.
- Complex texts, primary source documents, textbooks, the Internet, and articles from newspapers and journals are used by teachers as a source of materials for students. Students are encouraged with the support of various scaffolds, such as close reading, annotation and graphic organizers, to help inform and frame their thinking, create questions, and help them cite evidence.
- A review of lesson plans reflected multiple entry points such as tiered math problems, student choice in text, purposeful grouping based on a do-now, exit ticket, other types of formative class assessments, and front-loading of academic vocabulary. However the effective and well-written lesson plans were not always executed fully, resulting in some slow-paced classes and with limited engagement of students.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Across classrooms teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Assessment practices result in limited feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal reported that there was a school-wide grading policy aligned to the school's curricula that was posted in all classrooms. Some classrooms also had student work posted accompanied by a rubric. Posted work shows evidence of teachers having circled the rubric score and provided feedback and next steps for improvement to their students on the rubric sheet to support further student understanding and increased achievement.
- Across some classrooms, there was evidence of ongoing checks for understanding during group work through teacher check-ins. However, in one science class, the teacher's check for understanding consisted of these questions, "Why do we use litmus paper?," "What happens to the blue litmus paper?," "What happens to the pink litmus paper?," "What tool did we use to distinguish acids and bases?" These low-level questions did not scaffold to any higher-questioning resulting in a teacher-dominated lesson where engagement was low.
- Although teacher teams reported providing students with rubrics, the use of rubrics to allow students to peer and self-assess were not seen in any of classrooms. In one class, the teacher asked students to assess a class presentation but there was no evidence of how students were rating it, as no rubrics were provided to them and there was no discussion as to what criteria should be rated or assessed making it difficult for the students to uniformly give feedback to each group. Multiple types of rubrics were provided later by the principal, including a presentation rubric, which could have been used for this purpose.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Developing
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders ensure that teachers across grades 11 and 12 participate in structured professional collaborations. A distributive leadership structure is beginning to take place in the form of teacher team leaders per team to support teacher pedagogy and improve student outcomes.

Impact

The emerging use of an inquiry approach across grade teams is beginning to result in some improvements in instructional practices.

Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers are engaged in professional collaborations and have multiple opportunities to engage in work connected to implementing shifts, but it is not clear how their work strengthens student achievement for all learners, as these teams do not typically analyze data regularly as reported by some during a teacher team meeting.
- Grade level teams meet weekly to look at student work and have conversations about students and their academic challenges. An endeavor all teachers worked on collaboratively this year was supporting students with writing a research project, a task that teachers and students reported as being new to students across the school. One teacher indicated that with the large population of English language learners enrolled in their school who have interrupted educational experiences, she helps students to write in their native language first and then in English so they can organize their thoughts, but upon looking at a student's work product distributed at the team meeting, the teacher's feedback was not aligned to the rubric the student was required to use.
- In a team meeting, teachers were not able to discuss how they consistently analyze student assessment data or how they use it to inform their instruction. However, they did discuss using a protocol for examining work products called the Looking At Student Work Protocol (LASWP). Teachers reported that this protocol helped them look at student trends and helped them to inform their instruction, however not all teachers observed in the team meeting used it.