



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2015-2016

**The Young Women's Leadership School of  
Brooklyn**

**Middle-High School K614**

**325 Bushwick Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11206**

**Principal: Lani Lucas**

**Date of review: December 10, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Gary Knight**

## The School Context

The Young Women's Leadership School of Brooklyn is a middle-high school with 379 students from grade 6 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 4% Asian, 58% Black, 33% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 3% English Language Learners and 16% students with disabilities. Boys account for 0% of the students enrolled and girls account for 100%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 92.2%.

## School Quality Criteria

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

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training for those expectations. Teachers and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of expectations for all students with clear, focused, and effective feedback.

### Impact

The high expectations result in a culture of mutual accountability and allow students to own their own educational experience and be prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal provides a staff handbook that clearly details expectations. In addition, staff is involved with various professional learning activities that include, “The Big Rocks and the Sand”, which the school leaders use as an opportunity to reinforce and model expectations. As a consortium school, the Young Women’s Leadership network-wide mandatory professional development sessions are also presented around expectations and available resources.
- Professional learning times are built into the schedule to allow for regular meetings among teachers. Teacher leaders meet regularly with their team and also report back to leadership. This structure has allowed staff to hold themselves, leadership, and each other, accountable. In addition, there are daily morning meetings with staff to review expectations.
- There is a student-led conference protocol in place for teachers to work with students. The process consists of student preparation, reflection, and initial goal setting, SMART goal and action plan review, monitoring progress, and the actual student conference essay and presentation to parents.
- The school offers five advanced placement courses and participates in several college and career readiness partnerships. The Jumpstart to College Program with Baruch prepares twelfth grade students for college and beyond. College Now allows students to take college courses while in high school and provides feedback to students regarding progress and next steps. The College Bound Initiative places fulltime college guidance experts in the school, and the iMentor program builds relationships that empower students from low-income communities to graduate high school and succeed in college. Based on 2014-2015 data, 100% of the students at this school graduate within four years.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula, include instructional shifts, and consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

### Impact

Although students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks, high quality extensions into the curricula were not evidenced in a vast majority of classrooms. As a result, there are missed opportunities for student work products to demonstrate higher order thinking skills.

### Supporting Evidence

- Lessons were aligned to the curricula and informed by the Danielson Framework for teaching. For example, in a sixth grade English Language Arts (ELA) lesson students were expected to cite textual evidence supporting their themes in lyrics and poetry, and in a seventh grade math lesson, as part of a unit on rates and proportions, students were to represent proportional relationships by equations. Alignment and the incorporation of instructional shifts were also observed in a grade 7 Geology lesson on plate movement, as students were to construct an argument, supported by evidence.
- In a ninth grade Living Environment class, students were provided prompting/support questions, homogeneously and heterogeneously grouped for an activity based on level of support needed, provided guided notes, provided manipulatives, and front-loaded with vocabulary words and definitions. In a sixth grade ELA lesson, differentiation and multiple entry points were provided as well, to include, listening and reading lyrics, independent practice with poems at their reading level, and partner support for English Language Learners (ELLs). This lesson did provide an extension which was to identify what other messages are present in the song? Which is strongest and why? However, lesson extensions were evidenced in only one of seven classes.
- In a seventh grade science class students were provided multiple entry points. They were to construct an argument, supported by evidence, for Wegener's theory of Continental Drift. Included in the activity were an argument-writing checklist, a model of an argument essay with a graphic organizer, and a review of the three key elements of an argument essay.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the learning shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student data.

### Impact

Coherence of curricula across grades and subjects, that promote college and career readiness and access, cognitively engage all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- Staff professional development plans are differentiated to support instructional focus with an emphasis on rigor. In addition, strategically planned and conducted learning walks with staff build a school wide lens and definition for rigor. The learning walks hone in on both the elements of rigor and the curriculum, including exposing students to grade level common core-aligned work, creating challenging academic tasks that are supported with opportunities for students to set learning goals and self-monitor in order to be successful, and creating tasks that allow all students to demonstrate their understanding.
- The school developed profiles to identify specific skills and related activities for each course to ensure alignment to Common Core Learning Standards and it uses Understanding by Design for Unit Templates. The Understanding by Design template includes the identified desired results, the understandings, essential questions, related misconceptions, knowledge, skills, assessment evidence, and learning plan.
- The Use of the Measures of Student Learning assessment results guides instructional planning and adjustments. The staff used data to identify areas that get the most leverage in terms of student success. It was identified that students were not effectively transferring knowledge to test questions and needed support on providing evidence from text. Staff also looked at a decline in student performance as it relates to Level 3's and 4's in middle school English Language Arts and math. Based on analysis, teachers focused on incorporating additional higher order thinking activities into the curriculum to increase the level of rigor.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

The school uses common assessments, rubrics, and grading policies, that are aligned with the school's curricula, to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

### **Impact**

Results are used to make adjustments to curricula and instruction to meet the needs of all students.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school uses JumpRope, an online standards-based grading system that allows for timely feedback about student progress. The platform identifies areas where students are not yet meeting standards and teachers use the information provided to further drive instruction and reteach. For example, baseline data was collected for students. Based on data analysis, modifications were made to better address the English Language Learners by providing them material at differentiated levels and in some cases translated from English to native language.
- Teachers create benchmark assessments aligned to standards, analyze results using ATLAS protocol, and use data to inform next steps. For example, middle school math and English Language Arts results from state testing revealed where students were not meeting standards. Based on this information, the teachers selected certain standards as priority standards for instruction.
- The school has a three step process for assessing student work. For example, in an advanced placement language and composition class, students first peer assess with warm and cool feedback, then students self-assess stating whether or not they agree with peers comments, and lastly, the teacher comments, which in this case read, "the effect function does not connect back to the speaker's purpose."
- Rubrics are used to provide students with feedback and next steps that need to be taken to improve their work. For example, a twelfth grade student received the following feedback on a writing rubric for making an argument, "failed to introduce a relevant claim and lacked a thesis statement."

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured inquiry based professional collaborations in which they consistently analyze student data for students on whom they are focused.

**Impact**

The school's goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards are promoted and leads to the strengthening of the instructional capacity of teachers.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school is structured to have several inquiry teams including global history, which meets twice a month, high school math that meets weekly, and middle school math and English Language Arts that meets twice a month. In addition, grade teams meet monthly and professional development and grade leader teams meet weekly.
- I observed the social studies team involved in the inquiry process. Based on the Global Regents and data from other areas, it was revealed that students struggled with using facts to support claims. Hence, the meetings focused on strategies to best attack argumentative writing techniques to improve student performance in this area. The team reviewed a document titled, Sentence Templates for Argumentative Writing, which guided them in teaching students how to determine evidence, reasoning/justification of evidence, and defeating counterclaims.
- Teachers articulated the use of the MOSL assessment as a baseline for all grades. The analysis of the data presented an opportunity for rich discussions among the teachers and best practices were shared. It allowed teachers to set focus goals for instruction based on the data and to determine next steps. Action plans were developed and shared on google drive for all to access and share. It was also stated by teachers that the collaborative process is an additional means of peer support. Teachers incorporate, peer and administrator feedback into their lessons.