Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Young Women’s Leadership School, Queens

Secondary School Q896

150-91 87 Road
Queens
NY 11432

Principal: Mala Panday

Date of review: March 31, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Deborah Burnett-Worthy
### The School Context

Young Women’s Leadership School, Queens is a secondary school with 552 students from grade 6 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 32% Asian, 46% Black, 14% Hispanic, and 3% White students. The student body includes 2% English Language Learners and 13% 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 96.2%.

### School Quality Criteria

#### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
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</table>

#### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
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</table>

#### Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for professionalism and instruction to the entire staff and members of the school community, and provide ongoing support and related professional development. Teachers communicate high expectations to students and their families and offer resources and supports to help students prepare for the next level.

#### Impact
The school's ongoing communication of the expectations of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* promotes effective instruction school wide. Teachers use the school's core values and embed the skills for college and career into lessons to provide a clear path for students as they prepare for high school and beyond.

#### Supporting Evidence
- School leaders have utilized the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* as the core of high expectations for excellence in teaching. Teachers stated that observations and feedback around their practice and ongoing professional development around the expectations for pedagogy have resulted in a coherent culture for learning in the school.

- Teachers attend summer training retreats and engage in professional collaborations throughout the year via team meetings and full staff sessions where they focus on refining instructional plans. Clear systems and templates for unit and lesson planning have resulted in a seamless structure for which administrators and teachers hold themselves accountable for meeting the high expectations of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. As a result, all teachers at the school were rated Effective and Highly Effective in their pedagogy.

- Teachers consistently and effectively communicate the expectations of the school's core values and college and career readiness through PRIDE (Professionalism, Responsibility, Innovation, Determination, and Empathy). Students and parents spoke to these core values as part of the school's expectations for learning. Parents stated that they are made aware of whether their daughters were demonstrating these values weekly based on communication from teachers.

- The school's counselors offer a “menu” of activities including one-to-one counseling about the high school and college process. Students stated they are guided around achievement and interests, and all students interviewed expected to enter the college of their choice. All young ladies are given the opportunity to attend tours at colleges, and ninth grade teachers and counselors visit the school to see the level of student work being produced by freshman.
Area of Focus

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, reflect the school's beliefs that the ones doing the reading and writing are doing the learning. Teachers implement strategies that provide access to cognitively engaging tasks and ensure supports for diverse learners.

Impact

Teachers use a variety of questioning and discussion strategies to ensure that multiple entry points are built into lessons and provide opportunities for writing and student-to-student discussion. In some lessons, the emphasis on pacing and completing all the components of the lesson sometimes limits the extent to which discussions promote student ownership of the learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Administrators and teachers regularly monitor this school wide priorities by conducting instructional rounds or observations of lessons to identify trends and gaps in lessons. For example, after an administrative observational round focused on the instructional shift of close reading of complex texts, the team recommended allowing students to pair up for support when reading more difficult selections. Another recommendation, stemming from lesson observations, to support the shift from teacher-led to student-led discussion included the increase of “turn and talk” opportunities within lessons.

- Teachers use common and effective strategies to promote higher order thinking and writing in lessons. For example, in addition to think-pair-share for supporting student discussions, teachers in some middle school and high school math, science, and social studies classes, also asked students to write their thoughts before sharing. As a result, students were able to organize their thoughts, respond carefully to prompts, and listen to one another's complete ideas within the structured share time.

- Lessons reflect the rigor and critical thinking required of the Common Core Learning Standards as in a math lesson that required students to use data from random samplings to make inferences and predictions, and another lesson when students were asked to solve real-world problems and represent solutions algebraically. Tasks reflect student discussion and thinking in alignment with the school's beliefs about learners doing the work.

- Lesson structure across the school is guided by components that allow for explicit modeling in the “I do” portion, opportunities for guided practice in the “We do” portion, and independent practice in the “Students do” section. In some lessons observed, teachers moved through these sections of the lesson in a seamless manner, which permitted student discussions to unfold. However, in some classes, for example in a math class on area, some opportunities for conceptual understanding were missed because of limited reflection and working time for given tasks. In a science class, the teachers’ questions were mostly answered by one or two students using limited content language in their responses.
Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:** 1.1 Curriculum  
**Rating:** Well Developed

**Findings**
The school's well-aligned curricula are designed to engage all learners in cognitively challenging academic tasks and reflect the Common Core Learning Standards. Across all content areas, tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking.

**Impact**
Curricular decisions, driven by the Common Core Learning Standards' instructional shifts, result in school wide coherence. Lessons across all content and grade levels require students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, to demonstrate their thinking.

**Supporting Evidence**
- All units of study across content areas and grade levels are strategically developed using the *Understanding by Design* Framework, which requires that planning is built upon the goals of teaching and assessing for student understanding. Teachers have created, over several years, strategic planning structures that include the use of an online-aligned curriculum-planning tool, Atlas, which enables teachers and school leaders to align curricula to Common Core Standards. The web-based program is used to assess Common Core Standards alignment for every unit of study, thus evidence in standards analysis reports show that students are engaged in appropriately challenging content and tasks across all subjects.

- Across content areas, the school has embedded academic and personal skills development into the curricula by creating objectives parallel to learning targets. The acronym PRIDE which stands for Professionalism, Responsibility, Innovation, Determination and Empathy helps students to focus on their preparation for high school, and college and career goals as they engage in academic tasks. Ongoing conversations about these skills and learning targets for lessons across content areas result in student awareness and development of college and career readiness skills aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards.

- Learning needs of students are strategically addressed in a variety of ways across lessons and provide multiple entry points to learning so that diverse learners across the grades have access into the curricula to support them in demonstrating their thinking. There are particular strategies to target the needs of students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and high performing students. Teacher lesson plans, unit maps and their delivery show specific evidence of differentiated grouping, questioning and other forms of scaffolding to support students who need more support, as well as those who will benefit from experiences of enrichment. Special education teachers use a specific lesson plan template that was created by the department and the principal to ensure that content, skills and the scaffolds directly align to each student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment  Rating: Proficient

Findings
Teachers across content areas and grades use common assessments and rubrics to evaluate student work and progress, provide feedback about student progress, and make curricular and instructional adjustments based on analysis of this data.

Impact
The school's effective systems for analyzing student progress, learning strengths, and gaps, result in adjustments to lessons and units of study that meet the needs of diverse learners.

Supporting Evidence
- Quarterly assessments and performance tasks are essential to the school wide monitoring of student progress and mastery of learning targets, which are aligned to Common Core content and grade level standards. Teachers create data-driven action plans for each quarter based on student grades and design supports for students who score below 70% and extensions for students who score above 90%, thus the analysis of student progress results in strategies to meet student learning needs.

- Teachers state that the online grading system, Engrade, is aligned to Common Core Standards based assessments and provides the type of feedback they, as well as students, need to give them a picture of student mastery of goals within each unit of study. Students say the feedback is clear, they are able to see the alignment between the learning targets in each lesson, and their progress towards the mastery of the standards as reported online. Teachers use this data to reteach and to inform small group and extended supports that meet students' learning needs.

- Teachers use common rubrics for the major work in each content area. For example, a math rubric assesses students' problem solving strategies and process. In social studies, student responses to document based questions are assessed using a common rubric across grades. Some assessment rubrics cross grade levels and content areas. For example, a rubric for argumentative writing was used in English Language Arts and in science as students argued the topic of evolution. These school wide practices create a clear picture of student progress and mastery and allow teachers to adjust instruction to meet the needs of individuals and groups of students.
Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development  Rating: Well Developed

Findings
Teams of teachers systematically analyze teacher and student work and make key decisions that impact student learning school wide.

Impact
Teachers align their findings from review of student work to curricular and instructional planning documents and develop supports for students that result in mastery of goals for groups of students that they share. Structures for collaboration have expanded teacher leadership roles and increased opportunities for staff to influence school wide instructional initiatives that result in student progress.

Supporting Evidence
- All content area teachers are engaged in one full day each month in collaborative structures for inquiry and professional development that are made possible by the administration's strategic scheduling of classes. During these sessions, teachers analyze student and teacher work using a variety of protocols that yield changes to selection of texts and instructional materials and strategies within units of study. For example, all inquiry teams are responsible for creating action plans that are shared and monitored as living documents on Google Docs. These structures have increased instructional coherence across content area classrooms and improved planning across grades to support student progress of grade level standards and content. The number of students documented showing mastery across grade and content areas increased from 26% in the first marking period to 35% in the third marking period and are on track to double to 52% in the fourth marking period.

- The math team discovered a challenge in promoting student-to-student discourse. In reflecting on feedback from observations around related components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, they noted this was a priority area for improvement. Teachers then viewed videos of one another’s lessons and shared feedback to improve facilitation skills for classroom discussions. As a result, teachers state that there is an increase in math students’ comfort level in debating answers and discussing their work with one another with little or no prompting from the teacher.

- An inquiry team observed used a protocol for looking at student work in which the presenting teacher described the task and the three samples of student work which were annotated with teacher feedback to the students. Teachers reviewed each piece and then pointed out patterns in the student approach to the questions. Teacher teams also discussed possible strategies the teacher could use to reteach or adjust the task in order to help students meet the learning target and use academic language in their responses to solving equivalent algebraic expressions. This process has improved vertical planning across grades and as a result, students are exposed to similar structures and routines for lessons school wide.