Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Young Women's Leadership School, Astoria
Secondary School 30Q286
23-15 Newtown Ave.
Queens
NY 11102

Principal: Allison Persad

Dates of Review:
January 10, 2017 - January 11, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Carlos Perez
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Celebration to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Focus to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as Additional Finding. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

Young Women's Leadership School, Astoria serves students in grade 6 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>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</strong></td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>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</strong></td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>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</strong></td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<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 Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment
Rating: Well Developed

Findings
The vast majority of teachers create subject specific rubrics aligned to the school's shared outcomes and common assessments to gauge student progress towards goals.

Impact
Feedback to students is meaningful, actionable, and supplies students with a deep understanding of their achievements resulting in a clear picture towards student goals that is regularly tracked so that all learners demonstrate mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have created and implemented a standard uniformed rubric that is used as the basis for all rubrics throughout the school. The rubrics are slightly differentiated by subject. However, all have the same specific discrete 21st Century skills. All rubrics are aligned to the schools ten shared outcomes and allow uniformity throughout the school. Examples of the shared outcomes include, conclude, plan, communicate collaborate, and discern. During the student meeting, students communicated their knowledge of the rubrics and how it gives them focus and direction. A student shared how rubrics are aligned to outcomes and how outcomes are aligned to targets. For example, if a student is struggling with the outcome "communicate" they know "exactly what the problem is" and how to improve that one skill. Another student also shared how impactful the rubrics are to her by stating, "I think a really important aspect for me is that the skills are shared throughout the classes, it's all the same no matter what class. It's never a surprise."

- Teachers use JumpRope, an online resource, to track the acquisition of specific skills and progress toward standards-based proficiency for individuals and for groups of students. All teachers use the prior year's NY State assessments, including the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) and students take part in mock state assessments several times throughout the school year. Teachers and students then analyze the results to find out root causes of their errors. Additionally, all students are using electronic online portfolios to display and write about areas in which they excel or for which they need support. Portfolios are regularly reviewed by teachers to determine progress. Students shared that the online portfolios allow them to keep track of their progress and for them to see their growth and help them avoid similar errors in future work.

- Students receive regular feedback from teachers and their peers that is aligned to the rubrics for each task. Teachers shared that they view focused and targeted feedback as the basis for all student evaluation and described it as the “stepping stones to their final goals.” Teachers assess students during class conferences with the use of Google classroom. Teachers shared that one of the most important ways that they can gauge how their students are doing is by asking the students during conferencing sessions. During these sessions, they ask students to self-evaluate themselves and provide them with evidence of mastery for those areas they are conferencing about. Students shared how they enjoy the class conferencing sessions, as it really allows for one-on-one interactions between the teacher and student. One student shared, "When the teacher meets with me one-on-one, it shows that they care and are taking the time to offer me ways to improve."
Findings

While most lessons align to the schoolwide belief that instruction should be student-centered and that student work products should result from individual choices about learning, not all lessons consistently incorporate the instructional shifts.

Impact

While student discussions and written work demonstrate high levels of rigor, not all work products reflect high levels of student ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- Student centered lessons and an opportunity for student choice are part of the school’s beliefs regarding the teaching practices that reflect how students learn best. This is a sentiment that was shared by teachers and school leadership. Some of the classrooms visited reflected ample opportunity for students to participate in student centered learning. During a science class, students were working in lab groups, or with a partner, to conduct a science experiment that looked to answer how matter and energy interact. Students were given clear directions at the beginning of the class, and then worked amongst themselves collaboratively and independently of the teacher, thus, students took ownership of their learning. However, in an English Language Arts (ELA) class, students were introduced to annotation strategies that helped them navigate their confusion in a poem and discern their interpretations. During this lesson, the teacher provided ample modeling which gave students exemplars on how to annotate their poems. However, students were not given opportunities to work in groups or discuss any components of the lesson with a partner. Students sat at their desks as the teacher addressed them during the entire classroom visit.

- During a United States history lesson, students were separated into stations while the teacher conferences with individual students in the middle of the room. At one station, students were involved in a conversation in which they asked each other questions about the two-party system. One member explained that “A two party system is one where you have a majority and minority.” Additionally, students could clearly articulate lesson objectives and reasons for learning the information given to them. Once again, students did this on their own with the teacher acting as the facilitator. In a technology class, students developed an application for a local community business. Each group of students had specific functions, such as coders, graphic designers, website managers, and film crew. Students worked collaboratively within their groups and their work displayed high levels of critical thinking and participation. However, not all classes offered similar opportunities for students to display the same rigorous high levels of discussion and participation.

- The school also believes that students learn best when they work collaboratively in groups. During an ELA lesson, students took part in book clubs where they discussed and analyzed readings of their own choosing. Students were heard using accountable talk prompts, such as “I like what you said about the main character” and “I agree with you, but do you think that was the main character’s goal?”, which facilitated their discussions. Students also recorded their discussions and then analyzed their presentations along with their group members. Students’ collaborative groups were respectful, engaging, and gave all students an opportunity to engage in rigorous high level discussions.
### Additional Finding

#### Quality Indicator:

<table>
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<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
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<td>Rating: Well Developed</td>
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#### Findings

All curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and as a result, emphasize rigorous habits, higher-order thinking, and challenging materials for all learners.

#### Impact

All students are supplied with an educational experience that promotes college and career readiness across all grades and subject areas.

#### Supporting Evidence

- College and career readiness is the focus for all students. All curriculum is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and there is a purposeful and deliberate movement to incorporate literacy across all classrooms and subject areas. All classes, regardless of subject areas, are engaged in purposeful reading and writing at least three times per week. For example, planning for a software engineering classes asks students to write down two ways that would make a code efficient. Students then share their responses with at least two class members. A college algebra lesson plan centered mostly on word problems. Students solved several word problems and shared their answers with their group. Students were then challenged to create their own word problem that has a solution.

- There is coherence and rigor across all curricula, because of shared outcomes that all curricula are aligned. Those shared outcomes include: create, innovate, discern, conclude, argue, communicate, collaborate, plan, and being precise. Lesson planning for all classes incorporated numerous examples of how shared outcomes are incorporated. For example, an ELA lesson plan was aligned to the outcome: “discern.” Planning included students using annotation to understand the interpretations of a poem. By asking students to develop formal and informal discussion-based responses to the question “What is your interpretation of this poem? What is happening in this poem?” Students can address that shared outcome. Planning for this same shared outcome was seen in a United States History class. This lesson plan was for students to take part in station work. Each station has a specific goal and outcome and are all aligned to the “discern” shared outcome. One of the aims of a station was for students to “discern and evaluate the conditions that led to the market revolutions in America and to evaluate its impact on slavery and inequality.”

- Teachers have designed rigorous instruction that display coherence across all grade levels. There are multiple opportunities for students to cognitively engage in challenging activities that display higher-order thinking for all students. For example, in a Spanish/technology class, plans for rigorous instruction included students writing in code to construct a mobile computing application for local businesses, in both English and Spanish. A science lesson plan has students working on a project that investigates the effect of different factors such as temperature, surface area, and concentration on the rate of chemical reaction. The lesson plan offers differentiated strategies such as grouping students with higher skilled students and student choice of what factors they want to test. All students are expected to finish the lesson plan successfully.
Findings

High expectations are consistently and effectively communicated to all staff, students, and their families on a regular basis.

Impact

Consistent support and communication for high expectations are provided for the entire school community that is directly connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations begin with the dissemination of the staff handbook at the beginning of every school year. Expectations continue to be communicated to staff throughout the year through formal classroom observations, informal walkthroughs, and the school’s professional development plan. Expectations are evaluated using the Danielson Framework for Teaching through the formal and informal classroom observation process. Teachers develop their own individual professional development goals that can be found on the school’s Google Drive. Leadership and teachers discuss goals and use the information to develop the school’s professional development plan.

- Parents shared that the school has very high expectations for their daughters. They state that the communication between themselves and their daughters’ teachers is excellent. One parent stated, “I get informed about everything that goes on here” and how the school uses many different options when communicating with parents such as; emails, phone calls, newsletters, flyers, and parent teacher meetings. One parent explained, in a joking manner, how her complaint about communication is that there is “too much communication.” Parents also have an opportunity to meet with the principal once a month during “breakfast with the principal sessions.” Parents also shared how they take advantage of the parent engagement sessions every Tuesday after school. Parents explained that there is a real partnership feeling in the school. They feel as if they are active participants in everything that goes on in the school.

- Evidence of staff accountability includes a formal teacher intervisitation cycle that allows teachers to visit each other and provide feedback to their colleagues around all aspects of classroom instruction. Teachers then share best practices they see during their visits on the “Intervisitation Highlight Wall,” that can be found on a bulletin board for all to see. Teachers also fill out an intervisitation log that is found on the school’s Google Drive. Here, a detailed account of each intervisitation session is recorded and updated on a regular basis. As a result, classrooms have become a welcoming environment for collegial collaboration. During the teacher meetings, teachers spoke about the development of the school’s professional development (PD) plan and shared how this process is not a “top down” process but rather one where it feels more like a “bottoms up” process where it starts with the staff. One teacher stated, “We are now much more accountable and hold ourselves as such.”
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support &amp; Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings

Teachers are supported through a rigorous cycle of classroom observations that supplies effective, timely, and constructive feedback.

Impact

Teachers are offered support and direction that is aligned to teacher goals and promotes professional growth.

Supporting Evidence

- Administration is consistently following a structured teacher observation schedule to supervise and support all teachers. Leadership supports teachers by identifying areas of strength and areas of growth. An example of this was found on an informal teacher observation where teacher strength was noted as student engagement and student questioning strategies. Additionally, the areas of growth for this teacher was assessment. The school leader recommended using exit or summary slips for the students at the end of each lesson to, “Gauge student understanding of the concepts” learned throughout the lesson. The school leader shared that this could be something that directly addresses a skill, content vocabulary, or procedure that was taught during the lesson. In addition to this, the school leader recommended that the teacher increase literacy throughout future lessons.

- School leadership provides effective constructive feedback to teachers through regular formal and informal observation meetings. All observation data is recorded and tracked as a live document on Google Drive. All teachers are supplied with areas of strength and areas of growth. Feedback is precise, actionable, and offers next steps and a variety of resources to help teachers improve their pedagogical practice. During a math observation, the school leader captured a complete picture of the lesson by reporting anecdotal notes and listing important components of the lesson. During pre- and post-observation conferences, administration and the teacher discuss school goals to ensure that there is proper alignment and adjust as necessary for future lessons.

- New teachers are given support through a variety of observations from school leaders. All new teachers attend a two-day new teacher orientation that familiarizes them to the school and school community. During this time, new teachers are assigned teacher mentors that support new teachers personally and professionally. There is an intensive coaching procedure in place where teachers keep track of mentoring and intervisitation sessions. During these sessions, new teachers and their mentors discuss a variety of areas, such as, help contacting experts in the field, organizing field trips, and arranging time to co-plan. During this time teacher and mentor keep track of their entire session by documenting the teacher’s notes and results from the meeting, what actionable feedback the teacher mentor shared with the new teacher, and teacher needs. Additionally, there is a formal intervisitation schedule that is strategically used to support all teachers, especially those who are new to the teaching profession or new to the school. Teacher mentors and their mentees visit each other regularly and document every intervisitation session noting among other things, the teacher that was observed and “one awesome take away” from the lesson. A log is kept on Google Drive as a living document and is reviewed by administration on a regular basis.
**Additional Finding**

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams &amp; Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based collaborations that systematically analyze elements of teacher practice and student work products.

**Impact**

There is a focus on improving teacher practice that has resulted in instructional coherence and improved student learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- All teachers in all content areas participate in daily and weekly highly organized structured teacher team inquiry meetings. These meetings focus on lesson development, task analysis, analysis of student work, and the revising of curriculum. Common planning time is teacher-driven and teachers can select who they plan with. For example, in addition to their math and science department meetings, math and physics teachers engage in professional learning sessions to address the commonalities in the curriculum. Content leaders meet with school leaders once a month and make decisions based on teacher input as to what is needed to strengthen teacher pedagogical practice. Because of teacher team collaborations, there has been a complete mapping of the six through twelve curricula and the creation of a shared uniform spiraled rubric that is used schoolwide.

- Staff is empowered and there is a genuine feeling of “team” and “group” throughout the school. Staff and leadership both believe that one way of establishing distributive leadership is to have active multiple teams. Teachers shared, “I don’t think there is a member of our staff that isn’t on a team or leading a team.” Teachers went on to share that there is a strong feeling that the school belongs to them as a group and not one person. Teachers also shared that they are regularly encouraged to be leaders to take on leadership roles whether it be on a team or facilitating a PD session. Through the distributive leadership practice, teachers have created a uniform rubric that is used in every class and grade level.

- Teacher leaders and school administration have developed and implemented a Mastery Based Grading Handbook. The school uses Shared Outcomes that integrate 21st century skills. Teachers created this document in conjunction with the shared outcomes as a way of being able to grade students on individual 21st century skills instead of one grade for the entire class. The grading handbook clearly outlines all aspects of the grading process. Because of this accomplishment, there is more accountability, improved teacher pedagogy, staff ownership, and coherence that holds all students (regardless of labels) to the same high standards.