



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

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

**Middle School 896
109-120 Union Hall Street
Queens
NY 11433**

Principal: Avionne Gumbs

Dates of review: March 31 – April 2, 2008

Lead Reviewer: John Hudson

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well
What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review
Overall evaluation
How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Young Women's Leadership School of Queens is a middle school with 228 students from grade 7 through grade 9. The school population comprises 68% Black, 16% Hispanic, and 16% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 5% special education students. Girls account for 100% of the students enrolled. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 96.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 57% eligibility.

The school opened to grade 7 students in September 2005 and is one of four Young Women's Leadership Foundation schools in New York City. The first group of students entered the school's high school program in September 2007. The school anticipates reaching its capacity of approximately 480 students in September 2010. It shares a building with an elementary school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal shares her very high expectations for success with all sections of the school community and leads the school towards ambitious goals.
- The school has created a broad and exciting curriculum, which interests students, engages their attention and encourages them to learn.
- The principal and her staff make very good use of data to maintain a frequently updated understanding of student progress and achievement.
- Teachers work collaboratively to set demanding and objectively measurable interim goals with appropriate plans and timeframes to achieve them.
- Teachers and leaders take great care of students in their charge, including those in need of improvement, to ensure they progress well.
- Teachers and leaders make good use of data to inform their planning and fine-tune their instruction to meet the learning needs of every student.
- The principal and her staff provide a safe, inclusive and orderly learning environment for their students.
- An atmosphere of mutual trust and respect between students, staff and parents pervades the school.
- Teachers meet frequently, visit one another's classrooms, evaluate each other's performance and share effective practice.

What the school needs to improve

- Devise professional development plans to ensure teachers' skills continue to improve so the school will meet increasingly demanding academic goals.
- Introduce effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the school.
- Establish a process for continuously reviewing all plans, procedures and interventions and making timely revisions to ensure goals are met.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal has a clear vision and very high expectations that all girls at her school will flourish academically and personally. To achieve this vision she strives to provide a rich, engaging and academically challenging curriculum and inspirational instruction that is focused on individual needs and the necessary support to ensure student success. In addition, she is determined to free her students from some of the distractions, which might otherwise inhibit their progress. In this endeavor, she has the overwhelming support of her staff, students and their parents.

The school makes good use of data to understand student learning and monitor their progress. Students are supported through an effective advisory structure and their progress is very good. Teachers work collaboratively to set demanding goals and track student progress over time to ensure their success. They identify students at risk of underachieving and support them through well-established tutoring processes. The curriculum is broad and engaging with excellent opportunities for students to extend their knowledge and skills. Teachers refine their instruction to meet the learning needs of students. The school environment is positive and encouraging with effective procedures to ensure students continual progress.

Although teachers have had training to use data management systems, the school does not have an established professional development plan that sets priorities for staff training at specified times through the year. Neither are there established procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the school. The effectiveness of plans and procedures is monitored systematically but there is no structured way of making timely adjustments so changes can have immediate impact on student progress and achievement.

The school has made good progress with issues identified for improvement at the last Quality Review. The principal and her staff make good use of data management systems to compare performance across grades and classrooms. Achievement goals are specific, objectively measurable and linked directly to frequent assessment events. Teachers use data and inter-visitations to evaluate their classroom effectiveness. The inquiry team identified as their focus group those grade 9 students who entered the school from other middle schools last September and were at Level 2 and below in English language arts. The team is tracking the impact on this focus group of a cross-curricular literacy initiative introduced to all grade 9 students.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The principal and her staff have developed highly effective procedures for maintaining a constantly updated understanding of student achievement and progress. They gather a broad range of data, including attendance, State tests, teacher assessment, information from counselors and other support staff. Teachers and leaders make effective use of data management systems to analyze the performance and progress of individual students, classrooms and all other groups of interest them. Knowledge of student performance is enhanced by the school's scheduling arrangements, which provide each grade with a team of four academic subject teachers who teach the four classrooms in each grade. Grade teachers meet weekly and follow a cycle of activities, including regular progress tracking that follows the progress of every student in detail across all subjects, including physical education, arts and other subjects. In addition, teachers and students have their own data binders which they use to keep examples of work and an updated record of performance and progress as students move through the school.

The principal has access to all data held by teachers. She uses this to ensure students are progressing well in all classrooms, grades and subjects. She also makes sure that student progress in her school is comparable with other high achieving middle and high schools. The school makes good use of effective data management systems. Regular and effective professional development supports teachers in their use of data so that students continue to progress.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

At the beginning of each school year, subject teachers set annual subject goals which align with school goals. They also set interim goals at the end of each marking period. Subject teachers make very good use of their weekly grade level meetings to track individual students' progress towards these goals at regular stages throughout the year. Teachers, in their advisory role, work with individual students and their parents to ensure these interim goals are clearly understood and achieved. Students, supported by their parents, have a very good understanding of what they know and can do, of their next learning steps and how they can achieve their goals. Parents are supported by open communications with teachers and popular workshop events so they are directly involved in their children's learning. The school takes very great care to ensure the progress and achievement of every student, including those in greatest need of improvement.

The principal has very high expectations of student achievement which she shares with her colleagues, students and their parents in very practical ways. For example, grade 8 and 9 students have visited Yale and Columbia Universities where college students

showed them around the campus. The school's debate team has taken part in two events in a chamber in the United Nations building in Manhattan. The girls report these inspirational activities raise their expectations of what they are capable of achieving if they accept the academic and personal challenges before them. Students speak of their ambitions for the future with confidence and maturity.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

As the school grows by admitting a new grade 7 cohort each year, the principal has been able to broaden the curriculum to include arts, physical education and technology activities. The core curriculum includes good coverage of English language arts, math, social studies and science. Effective curricular structures enable teachers, students and parents to monitor student progress in these subjects. The Young Women's Leadership Foundation provides funds which have enabled the school to include art, music, drama, debate, health education, robotics and architecture in the curriculum. It is clear that these additional subjects have a strong impact on students' interest and motivation to succeed.

The principal makes very good use of the resources available to the school. The school has invested in technology to support learning with an interactive SMART board in each classroom and sufficient laptop computers to meet current student needs. Students are being trained to access and use the Acuity data management system to assess their achievement and progress in English language arts and math.

The principal holds teachers accountable for the quality of their instruction and the progress of students in their charge. Teachers make good use of data to refine their teaching plans to meet the learning needs of individual students. Levels of engagement are high and students progress well. The staff team has worked hard to create a very positive, caring, safe and inclusive learning environment with a very strong focus on mutual trust and respect throughout the school community. Parents, students and teachers are delighted to belong to this school community. The school makes effective use of clear procedures to ensure students attend regularly and punctually and that very good attendance is celebrated. Attendance rates are high and improving.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal encourages her colleagues to work proactively to support every student so they achieve as highly as possible. Teachers make considerable use of all the available opportunities to support student learning directly in before- and after-school, Saturday morning and lunchtime activities. Teachers also work closely together to discuss student progress, identify students who are performing well and those who are underachieving in order to refine their instruction and accelerate learning. Teachers visit

each other's classrooms, evaluate each other's performance and share effective classroom practice.

Professional development is not as well organized as it was last year, mainly as a consequence of the school's rapid growth and necessary investment in hiring teachers, support staff and learning resources rather than administrators. Although a recently appointed teacher reports that the support she has had from teachers and the principal has been "tremendous", current procedures to support new teachers are less thorough than in the school's first two years. In addition, although teachers' needs are generally met, there is no clear and prioritized plan for professional development as the school expands and as its expectations for student progress and achievement continue to rise. Training in the use of data has been effective and teachers make good use of school data management systems.

The school provides excellent support services for individual students so they can flourish and succeed. The partnership with the school's Foundation is very helpful in broadening the curriculum. Through an affiliation with New Visions, grade 9 students receive support to develop literacy skills in subjects other than English. The principal ensures the school runs very smoothly and that students make good progress. Students and parents are aware that well-designed and effective procedures are in place to ensure discipline-related incidents and any other distractions are addressed promptly.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has developed clear procedures to set objectively measurable and demanding goals that can be used to track the performance of students and teachers. Goals have suitable plans and timeframes to make them achievable. There is very good collaboration throughout the school community to ensure everyone consistently applies this process in order to track the progress of each individual student and all groups of students rigorously over time. However, while adjustments to plans, procedures and interventions are made, these modifications are not consistently responsive to the needs of learners. There is no clear process to link systematically the review of all plans, procedures and interventions with timely improvements that will have the greatest impact on learning. As a result, there is no planned means to ensure that the school's demanding goals will be met.

The principal has established demanding goals to drive continuous school improvement. She has empowered her staff and her students to pursue excellence and they respond with much enthusiasm and determination to succeed. The principal has an ambitious vision for future development, which is shared throughout the school community. With the active encouragement of their parents, students expect to do well and teachers have the skills to help them. In consequence, the school is making very good academic progress. The principal and her team are resolved to keep it that way.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Young Women's Leadership School of Queens	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
---	---	---	---	---	---

Quality Score			X		
----------------------	--	--	---	--	--

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?				X	
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?					X
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?			X		
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?			X		
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?			X		
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X		

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X		

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped