



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

New Utrecht High School

High School 445

**1601 80 Street
Brooklyn
NY 11214**

Principal: Maureen Goldfarb

Dates of review: May 15-16, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Andy McClean

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

New Utrecht High School is a high school with 2879 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 9% Black, 31% Hispanic, 33% White, and 27% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 86.5%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The principal took up her post in December 2007.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and administration use focused self-evaluation to determine key areas for improvement.
- Data collected from a wide variety of sources provides the whole faculty with a very good understanding of students' current performance.
- Special education students and English language learners receive very good support as a result of detailed analysis of their needs.
- A climate of mutual support and reflection is evident.
- A team spirit pervades all student-teacher interactions, which results in students' determination to fulfill their potential.
- Well-focused, structured programs exist to intervene and support those whose progress falters.
- Clear systems of communication ensure teachers, students and parents understand the high expectations placed on them.
- A challenging curriculum, linked with programs to support their personal and social development, enhances students' motivation to learn.
- Adults, with their many and varied responsibilities, provide exemplary role models for students to emulate.
- Determination of professional development priorities results from effective analysis of instructional practice.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish a strategic action plan, with clearly defined success criteria and interim steps to measure and evaluate progress.
- Help teachers understand how to use data to differentiate their instruction more effectively.
- Use self-evaluation structures to develop teacher reflection on what constitutes the best aspects of instruction.

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 well developed.

In her first six months in the role, the principal has built on solid foundations, with exemplary support from cabinet and teachers that has led to good progress since last review. Links between different departments now exist, with a particular emphasis currently on improving students' comprehension of subject vocabulary. Very good progress is evident in the collection and correlation of a wide range of data. This results in provision of detailed data for teachers to improve their knowledge of students' levels of achievement. As yet, use of this data does not lead to a depth of differentiation to challenge the range of students in classes. Special education students and English language learners benefit from programs derived from detailed scrutiny of data. As a result of that very effective support programs are implemented, with regular assessment of their progress that assists their learning. The school rightly recognizes the increase in the number of English language learners in their school population. The inquiry team researched a specific subgroup of these students, and implemented interventions based on the lessons learned from the exercise. Early results show great success in improvement in both attendance and academic progress. The school plans to extend such support to other identified, at risk students. Detailed school self-evaluation identifies many aspects of challenge the school now faces. The principal and a very encouraging cabinet, realize the need to address the needs of a challenging group of underachieving students. They understand the many benefits that accrue from the research and encourage debate from the whole faculty on new instructional initiatives. Systems of communication enable parents, teachers and students to understand and share the school's high expectations. Discussion of strategic goals is evident within cabinet, school leadership team and faculty meetings. The school lacks a definitive, written, action plan to outline goals and support the evaluation of progress. There is an absence of defined benchmarks to measure progress towards them and allow for re-adjustments. Students engage enthusiastically in a stimulating curriculum. Many arts programs enhance the core subjects.

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 school uses a wide range of data very effectively to monitor current student performance. Both formal and informal tests contribute to teachers' understanding of

students' next steps. Special education students receive particularly good support, with barriers to their progress identified immediately on entry to school, resulting from detailed data scrutiny. Very good links between support staff and teachers results in these students' full inclusion in school programs and activities. Regular formal updates on their progress occur through contact with students and parents. The school uses its well-embedded data collection systems to analyse its increasing population of English language learners. The inquiry team uses this information successfully to identify barriers that stand in the way of their achievement. The team selected a group of 24, grade 9 students from this cohort, who demonstrate poor motivation to attend school and participate in education. Each member of the team takes responsibility for three students to ensure their eventual graduation.

The principal, well supported by her assistant with the specific responsibility for data analysis, scrutinizes past performance data and uses the results to generate new objectives and targets. Comparison of progress with peer schools is evident with the cabinet following up data analysis with visits to selected schools in order to compare and contrast instruction and planning methods. Training for the faculty in the collection of data is successful in ensuring improvements in differentiation.

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.

There is a strong team spirit of co-operation and collaboration in all aspects of school life. Faculty, cabinet, grade and department meetings occur on a planned and regular basis that contributes to the improvement of instruction. Data use underpins all activities. Assistant principals show particular skill in effectively communicating and disseminating data to their colleagues. Classroom teachers use the data to enable them to address the particular needs of groups identified as at risk of failure, as well as other students. Inquiry team research leads to very effective support for students deemed most at risk of failure. As a result, plans exist to widen the numbers of students in similarly challenging categories, with specific attention paid to the school's increasing population of English language learners.

All groups of students and their parents receive regular updates on progress towards their goals. Teachers and adults throughout the school convey very high expectations to their students and parents. Foremost, is the principal's clear vision of the school's prime purpose to raise student achievement. Teachers listen with respect and respond appropriately to students' requests for advice. The faculty's availability to conference with students about their goals contributes very effectively to student understanding of their next steps. Many informal meetings and conversations students have with their teachers support progress. Parents testify to the school's openness to listen to their concerns. This leads to regular and helpful discussions with students and parents on how they can improve their performance.

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.

Cabinet uses data very effectively to determine a curriculum that focuses on improvement of core literacy skills. In all classes, teachers now link opportunities to extend student competencies in the use of literacy and mathematics skills. Teachers across the school make every effort to ensure student comprehension of new vocabulary they will encounter in classes. In a grade 8 career and technology class, students receive specific guidance on the mathematics involved in computer-aided design of floor plans. Student comprehension of the written word in all departments is also a major school focus. Trips to France, Italy and Spain, organised by school, make a major contribution to their use of these languages in real life settings. Classes such as sports medicine and law, enable students to experience real life scenarios that bring greater relevance to classes. Teachers show great enthusiasm for their roles and high levels of subject expertise. Coaches and professional development staff accept a need to improve differentiation to ensure high achievers do not repeat work they can already carry out. Teachers across the school make every effort to ensure student comprehension of new vocabulary they will encounter in classes. Teachers understand a need to provide greater differentiation for their students. They now seek to develop investigations and projects that enable students to pass tests, but also retain knowledge and understanding to apply to other subjects.

Very good leadership from the principal, well supported by a faculty aware of the school's major challenges, results in a vibrant, caring and fully inclusive school. School leaders communicate a tangible message of mutual trust to parents and students. Parents and students respond with great enthusiasm for all aspects of school life. The school buzzes with energy, as many students prepare for a "Back to the 80's" concert featuring dancers, musicians and stage technicians drawn from all school cohorts. Parents use many formal and informal avenues of contact to improve the dialogue with school. Effective strategies to encourage attendance have resulted in high attendance rates. Pride in school sports teams thrives, with the football team's eager participation in a weeklong summer training camp. Regular drama and music, such as orchestra and rock band productions celebrate other student talents.

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 well developed.

Administration use a formal structure of classroom observations to gain data that influences decisions to improve instruction. Daily informal visits to classes add to the wealth of knowledge that cabinet, staff developers and mentors use to plan and direct professional development. Currently, professional development activities focus on the improvement in the use of technology to provide greater differentiation of challenge to students. Frequent structured and informal opportunities exist to develop innovative practice across all classes. Good use is made of recently purchased technology to show colleagues the power of the visual image. Grade, department and faculty meetings, led

by very focused assistant principals, result in effective evaluation of instruction. School leaders have a good understanding of the need to increase teachers' own self-evaluation as the best means of enhancing instruction. Teachers show great support for programs of professional development to assist them in improving their students' results. Their openness and candor about areas to improve shows an intellectual understanding of pedagogy. Teachers new to the profession and school receive exemplary support from dedicated mentors and many informal contacts with friendly and open colleagues. Peer mediation programs empower students with real life skills at the same time as diffusion of possible confrontations in school. Personal and emotional guidance supports students' wider concerns exceptionally well.

The school provides a wide range of experiences to improve motivation and accelerate their learning. Activities such as celebration of Chinese New Year dragon dance displays, a trip to "Repertorio Espanol" for English language learners to watch plays in Spanish and an English department visit to Salem, encourage greater student motivation to learn. From such activities, combined with clear conduct procedures, the school runs very smoothly.

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 works successfully towards clear strategic goals. Good communication ensures the whole faculty understands its main priorities in improving student achievement. However, there is an absence of a written strategic action plan to make evaluative measurements of progress towards these goals. Evaluation of the suitability of programs of instruction and application of resources, both technical and human, still require improvement to measure their impact on student progress. Current evaluation of the match of staff to the wide range of responsibilities in school continues. Conclusions from this process have yet to be drawn. Greater teacher self-evaluation of effective instruction and modification of methods begins to show results, with teachers aware of the need to develop such skills.

A study of grade 9 Hispanic students results in changes to support and instruction for them against their particular comprehension difficulties. This now extends to instruction of all students due to good communication of data and lessons learned from the study to the whole faculty. The principal demonstrates trust in a cabinet, and faculty, of caring, highly professional colleagues. Their determination to ensure specific groups of students make progress is laudable. This is particularly evident in the identification of English language learners, the fastest expanding cohort in school. Self-evaluation begins to move responsibility for increased student achievement to classroom teachers. The principal and school leaders understand their major challenges and have a clear vision for moving the school forward. The commitment and enthusiasm of the staff support the capacity to implement future plans.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: New Utrecht High School	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