



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

University Neighborhood Middle School

Middle School 332

**220 Henry Street
New York
NY 10004**

Principal: Cynthia Kerr

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Lead Reviewer: Cheryl Baker

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

University Neighborhood Middle School is a middle school with 280 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 29% Black, 61% Hispanic, 3% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 9% 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 92.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 81% eligibility.

The school was founded by the current principal in 2004 and has grown by one grade per year. Additional teachers have been hired each year. Most are new to the profession. The school shares a facility with two other schools and draws students from a wide range of elementary schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Extensions to the curricular and extracurricular programs present students with interesting and enjoyable additions to learning.
- Students receive effective support for their social, emotional and personal development through the advisory program.
- Teachers use grade team meetings and content team meetings to effectively collaborate, plan and share best practice.
- High quality professional development is effectively differentiated to meet the varied needs of teachers, and special support is provided to those new to the profession.
- Administrators make good use of student achievement data to analyze the progress of classes, grade levels and academic subjects to adjust plans appropriately.
- Administrators use comparisons with similar and neighborhood schools to improve practices and measure progress.
- Administrators make successful strategic decisions regarding staffing, scheduling and expenditures to support student achievement.
- Regularly scheduled academic programs are effective in meeting the identified needs of all students, including high achievers.
- The school's mission and high expectations drive whole-school planning and are clearly communicated to all constituencies.
- Strong relationships with community organizations are very effective in aiding the school's mission and students' academic and social development.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop systems and management to support teachers' access to, and use of, objective data sources for diagnosing students' needs.
- Continue to provide training for analyzing student work and formative sources of information to further refine students' learning needs and strengths.
- Provide sustained and embedded training for differentiating instruction based on students' discrete learning needs.
- Continue to support students in making appropriate behavioral choices and assist teachers in developing effective classroom management skills.
- Continue to broaden and deepen goal-setting practices for students to provide greater focus on academic achievements.
- Increase the focus of whole-school plans on measurable targets for students' achievement and agree to short-term objective measures of progress.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The school has made good progress at the administrative level, in gathering, and analyzing data effectively. The monitoring of student progress that occurs at the class, grade and subject level is very good. Relations with similar schools inform and raise leadership and teaching practices and further, good initiatives are taken through collaboration with neighboring schools to conduct inter-visitations. Administrators and teachers focus especially on knowing their students well and supporting their social and emotional development which is effectively accomplished through the advisory classes. In-school interventions are quite effective in addressing identified needs of the students and they provide opportunity for enrichment. Teachers are developing their skills in using quantitative and qualitative data to identify students' learning needs but training in this is currently insufficient. Knowledge of how to use assessment information to plan for differentiated instruction is underdeveloped. Effective systems to support teachers' access and use of data lack robustness. Goals and plans support the school's institutional development and reflect its values well. They do not, however, sufficiently set achievement targets, nor do they specify objective measures of interim progress. Student goal setting has begun but there is insufficient focus on extending it to the academic. Teachers have ample time and use it well to plan for instruction and to address the personal needs of students. The curricular program, especially the interdisciplinary humanities approach, is effective in engaging students in their learning. Broad enrichments are effective in extending academic, artistic, academic, cultural and civic learning. Despite this, student behavior is not always optimal for learning and the school has yet to address this systemically.

The inquiry team is progressing as per City expectations and is developing skills in using authentic indicators of student learning to inform practice. Areas for improvement from the previous Quality Review that still need to be addressed include strategic planning, the use of data by teachers and differentiation of instruction. Good progress has been made in broadening the curriculum.

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 proficient.

Administrators have developed good practices that assist them in understanding the progress of students, classes, grade levels and subjects. In addition to analyzing State and City test results and other anecdotal sources of data, they effectively employ a system used in high schools to track the progress of students by subject and teacher. This is

updated regularly. Trends from this data present a deep understanding of students' learning and that of teachers' effectiveness. As the school has increased its population over the last four years, particular attention has been paid to the progress of students, year-on-year. This has informed interventions and teacher placement, particularly in math where overall performance lags behind English language arts. Data is also scrutinized to determine what elementary school students have attended and findings are used to group them to address differences, especially in math. Administrators move beyond statistical comparisons with similar schools to collaborate with neighboring schools to share effective practices and conduct intravisitations.

Specialist teachers effectively monitor the progress of special education students and English language learners in accordance with their individual plans and mandated testing. Additional assessments are used to diagnose any particular needs and track subsequent progress. The progress of ethnic and gender groups is analyzed and charted to reveal trends and patterns in State tests. This informs placement and intervention decisions. For instance, discrepancies in reading between boys and girls led to an increase in high-interest titles for males. The school's infrastructure does not support ready access to on-line data sources and this is a barrier to optimal use of objective sources of information, such as that generated through Acuity. Although teachers are learning how to better analyze student work to determine next steps for teaching and learning, data gathering and analysis skills vary, and school-wide systems, such as uniform expectations for data binders, are not in place.

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 proficient.

Whole-school plans, including the Comprehensive Education Plan, are developed collaboratively and describe goals that are reflective of the school's overall mission and philosophy. There is good coherence between plans that have a strong focus on institutional improvements appropriate to a new school still developing. Plans and goals are sufficiently communicated so that members of the school community know the overall direction. However, goals lack emphasis on improving student achievement in order to be really effective tools for driving academic gains. Nonetheless, very high expectations for students' high school and college successes are communicated broadly and effectively to students and parents. This emphasis, and the strong relationship the school has with New York University, attracts students and their families to the school.

Academic teams and grade-level teams provide effective structures for teachers to discuss student progress and identify particular areas of need. There are also good informal opportunities for productive exchange, which result in very good attention to students' emotional and social needs, as well as their academic needs. Additionally, effective measures have emerged to address deficiencies in math performance. Extended day programs in math take place during the regular school day ensuring that all who need help will attend and those that do not will receive enrichment. The expertise of newly hired administrative, teaching and F-status personnel is addressing the needs of special education students and English language learners very well. The school welcomes parents and they appreciate the open lines of communication that exist between homes and the school. Parents receive regular communication about their child's achievement and recent expansion of the progress reports is providing more detail. Students often set personal goals, but these are largely directed at social and emotional development rather

than academic achievement. While this practice has begun in some classes, it is neither widespread nor shared with parents.

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 proficient.

The school’s curricular approach emphasizes an interdisciplinary approach, which is particularly effective in linking English language arts, social studies and the arts, resulting in strong gains in State tests. Revisions to the math curriculum and extended time for learning and planning effectively focus on raising student achievement in that area. The broadly enriched curricular and extracurricular programs provide wide opportunities for students to extend their learning, explore new topics, and participate in sports, clubs and student government. These present opportunities for students and teachers to interact in a variety of settings and builds trust among them. School is fun for students, who attend in good numbers. Attendance averages are maintained because of effective and consistently applied procedures.

Teachers are held accountable for progress and learning through the regular analysis of their students’ progress. Daily classroom visits inform administrators and coaches as to the level of engagement and inclusiveness in classrooms. These practices effectively support teachers’ adherence to expectations set down in the faculty handbook. Generally, instruction is interesting, especially in humanities classes such as the good integration of social studies content and English language arts skill development. However, while some lessons provide differentiated activities, widespread differentiation for individual students is not a feature of most lessons; nor is the robust use of student achievement data when planning for instruction. The administration has made very effective decisions regarding budgetary allocations, staffing and scheduling to support the instructional program. For example, the schedule supports flexible grouping and focused daily-extended time in math to address declines in scores. A double period accommodates the interdisciplinary humanities program with good results in learning. New hires have brought much-needed expertise in administration, data analysis, English language learner instruction, special education, math and drama, with associated improvements in these aspects. Effectively allocated funds support the staff development and especially the needs of new teachers. Reduced class sizes and increased planning time have resulted in improved teaching and learning.

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.

To continue to develop the skills of teachers, many of whom are new to the profession, the school has created a broad and varied professional development program, which is effectively supporting their growth. Teachers have benefitted from participating in workshops and conferences with nationally recognized experts in such things as, curriculum development, Socratic seminars, and protocols for looking at student work. Retreats supplement reading materials and faculty and grade conferences, and foster the development of leadership at the whole-school, grade and subject level. Coaching is

differentiated according to need and the well-developed mentoring program includes expert coaching for instruction, as well as for development of effective classroom management techniques. Administrators and coaches are frequent visitors in classes and have developed effective formats for providing instructive feedback to teachers as they hone their craft. They know their staff well and capitalize on this to address the needs of each. The increase in grade and content meeting time has been a very positive influence on teachers' collaboration and planning, especially for math and humanities. Effective practices are shared freely, and visits to other schools and among classes are helping to develop the skills of, especially, those new to teaching.

The advisory program, which provides regular small group counseling for all students, is very effective in supporting their personal, emotional and social growth. The work of the guidance counselor and other social service personnel supplements this. Students are well known and cared for. They also benefit from very strong relationships with outside agencies such as New York University, NASA, and the New Schools Initiative. These and others are effective in providing programs, or support for programs, aimed at the academic and personal development of students. There are clear procedural expectations for students, parents and teachers. However, in spite of these, and the school's caring and supportive approach, the behavior of some students disrupts learning often enough to indicate that effective procedures to counter negative attitudes remain insufficient.

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 strongly collaborative leadership of the school provides an effective structure for monitoring progress and making necessary adjustments. Importantly, the school leadership team plays an active role in monitoring progress. While school plans lack timelines and interim measures of success, they have been effective, overall, in guiding the school's development and communicating the principal's clear vision. In addition, the three-year plan for the school's growth, developed collaboratively with New York University, continues to effectively guide decision-making. As well, administrators are flexible and astute in revising plans when evidence warrants improvements. Technology resources have been redeployed to provide greater in-class access and to reduce incidents occurring when moving to the former lab. Consultant funding has been reassigned when needs identified a weakness in students' grasp of math vocabulary.

Plans are revised annually, and future planning is tightly linked to previous accomplishments and current needs, especially for the development of the whole school. Increasingly, teachers set goals for their development keyed to professional teaching standards, and administrators monitor their effectiveness formally and informally, deploying expert coaching help to targeted staff. The progress of those students most at risk is monitored effectively by specialists and through advisories and extended-day interventions, which are adjusted to individual needs. In classrooms, teachers are improving their capacity to use periodic and other assessments to revise plans, such as re-teaching a concept. However, this good practice is not sufficiently developed across all aspects to ensure that goal setting, planning and revision to fully address the needs of all students are consistently met.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: University Neighborhood Middle 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