



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Unity Center for Urban Technology

High School 500

**121 Avenue of the Americas
New York
NY 10013**

Principal: Fausto De La Rosa

Dates of review: May 15 - 16, 2008

Reviewer: Santiago Taveras

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Unity Center for Urban Technology is a high school with 172 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises of 49% Black, 48% Hispanic and 3% other. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 20% 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 77.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 87% eligibility.

The principal is in his first year and the school is located on the fourth floor of a five story building, that houses other businesses and not for profit organizations.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision and mission of the direction for the school.
- The school has established clear expectations for the staff and students.
- The school provides a safe and orderly environment where students and parents feel welcome.
- The school has developed a strong relationship with the community based organization in their building, which provides additional support for the students.
- The school has made improvements towards meeting its goals to increase student outcomes in the areas of Regents results, graduation rates and scholarship results.
- Well-targeted professional development to address the different needs of the staff is provided by the principal and the school support organization.
- Parents, students and staff have seen notable improvement in communication.
- New structures to monitor attendance and to inform parents have been implemented and are effective and practical.
- Students have good opportunities to earn credits through their Saturday academy and their afterschool courses.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a system to monitor student progress, by gathering data for individual students, classes, grade level and subject area.
- Establish protocol for developing student goals, class goals and grade level goals.
- Develop a culture for collaborative planning of lessons and curricula that is engaging, differentiated and rigorous.
- Provide students with youth development, guidance and advising and other support to help them set goals and prepare for post graduation.
- Establish procedures for monitoring student performance and the effectiveness of the plans and interventions so that the staff may more readily see what revisions are needed.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made some progress in addressing the needs identified in the previous Quality review.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

Under the guidance of the new principal, the school has been able to establish clear expectations for staff and students. The principal has partnered with their school support organization to provide professional development opportunities for all staff. He has a good understanding of the areas for improvement and will continue to set priorities and address areas of needs. The staff is mixed in their level of experience. The faculty's level of ownership and buy-in varies from member to member. The principal has started to build community and establish well grounded practices to move the school forward.

While the school has made improvements towards student outcomes there aren't clear protocols for setting student, classroom and grade level goals. Additionally, differentiation of instruction is not consistent throughout the school. While the administration analyses specific student data there is no system in place to facilitate data analysis for teachers.

Under the leadership of the new principal, the school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report. The school has started to implement structures that allow for the monitoring of student progress at different times of the school year. They have increased the technology and professional development opportunities for all staff and have invested a substantial amount of money on the purchase of books. The inquiry team is focusing on the lowest performing group of 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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school effectively collects data for the areas that it has identified as priorities for the year. These areas are increasing the passing rate for Regents' exams, credit accumulation, raising the pass rate for all classes and improving the graduation rate. The principal has provided suitable opportunities for the staff to learn more about collecting data and analyzing it and these are beginning to help teachers make instructional decisions. The school has yet to develop a system where all teachers collect data of individual students to understand the strengths and needs of each child in

the core subject areas of English and math. The administration currently uses reports from the City's computer system, that provide information about student grades, credit accumulation class pass rate, subject area pass rate and meets with the staff after every marking period to review the information to develop a plan of action for the school.

The school has not developed a consistent structure to collect information about individual student progress or a system for analyzing data in subgroups such as gender, grade level, students with special needs and other subgroups important for the school. The school does not analyze the information gathered to compare itself to previous years or other similar schools. Since the school's inquiry team does not meet regularly, it cannot provide support in these areas to improve student outcomes.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The principal has set a number of broad goals that help them drive the agenda for the year, but he has not set measurable targets for each goal. These goals are to increase the number of students passing Regents examinations, increasing the opportunity for students to accumulate credits, to improve the graduation rate and to raise the attendance rate. The staff, parents and students are able to articulate these goals and understand the importance of improving the overall student achievement. The school has been successful in conveying high expectations to students and to parents. Teachers and parents agree that the school has improved the level of communication at the school. The principal issues an informative weekly bulletin that provides the staff with important dates, reminders of the new systems and structures, as well as upcoming events. The parents also get a monthly calendar with special events, dates for the parent-teacher association meetings. The school sends home report cards after every marking period. Some teachers call home between each one of the six marking periods to provide parents with a progress report before the end of the year. As a result, calling home is not a practice that is implemented by all staff members.

The principal has personally looked at every student's transcript, reviewed the courses completed, the credits earned and the Regents exams results to determine the next steps for each student, including the Regents exams preparation courses required graduation. The principal is working on developing the staff's knowledge of data collection and has modeled and trained the staff on how to analyze the data and use it to set goals for their classes and their students. It has yet not become a common practice with all staff members. The purpose of the inquiry team is to focus on the group of the lowest performing students. The school's inquiry team does not meet on a regular basis. As a result, the school does not have specific plans for the lowest performing students.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school has made a strong effort to increase the students' credit accumulation from year to year. The school displays posters in every classroom which provide students with information about the graduation requirements. Students are well aware of the graduation requirements and can articulate the progress they have made and the course work necessary for graduation. The school provides good after school and Saturday opportunities for students to get additional tutoring, credit accumulation opportunities or test preparation. Some students have taken advantage of these opportunities and, as a result, will be graduating after three years. Others graduate in three and a half years.

Most of the staff and students feel that the school has established effective structures to improve attendance, deal with lateness and work with discipline issues. The school has just introduced an electronic identification system which helps track both lateness and attendance. This system is able to print late passes for students, reducing the amount of time the student has to wait in order to get to their class. The improved communication has also developed a higher level of trust and respect between students and teachers, but there is lack of buy-in from a small group of staff members, which prevents the school from having a more collaborative and cohesive team working together to develop curriculum, analyze data and improve student outcomes.

In order to address differentiation of instruction, the school has purchased an additional 60 laptop computers, projectors, Smart boards for the classrooms and has purchased over \$80,000 worth of books and textbooks. The effective use of these tools varies from class to class. The lesson structure is also different from room to room and, consequently, the level of engagement by the students varies from teacher to teacher. The school does not have a consistently engaging and differentiated instructional practice in place across the classrooms.

The principal has worked with the staff on developing more effective assessments to help diagnose the strengths and needs of each student within the core curriculum. There is some evidence of staff implementing interim assessments then analyze the results of these tests, and use the information gained to set goals to raise students' achievement, but this is not yet commonplace.

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 has been proactive in providing the staff with well focused professional development opportunities. From the beginning of the year, with the assistance of the school support organization, the principal was able to provide the teachers with a series of trainings on how to develop a lesson plan. The staff continues to work on developing a common approach to teaching using the information provided in the trainings. There has been some progress made in this area with many of the teachers. There has also

been a focus on differentiated instruction. Some of the teachers use the new laptops, the projectors and the new books to differentiate instruction. As a result of the training, there is evidence of good differentiation practices in some of the classes.

The administrative team provides consistent feedback through the formal teacher observation process. The team visits classes on a daily basis and provides teachers with information on what they saw that was commendable and gives suggestions and strategies to help improve their instruction. The school provides professional development based on the needs of the staff. There is an inter-visitation program, where teachers are encouraged to visit each other's classes and share promising practices. The school support organization provides the school with good professional development and training based on subject area. Some teachers noted this as an improvement over previous years. Teachers and students agree that the school has been running more smoothly this year, because of the hard work of the administration and the professional development on classroom management. They feel that there are less interruptions and that the students understand the clear expectations and consequences of their actions.

The school has built a strong partnership with the community based organization called The Door located in the building. Based on the needs assessment of the guidance department and the level of support provided at the school, the principal has decided to have The Door provide the students of the school with college information, guidance and preparation for the college acceptance exams. The school's guidance is an underdeveloped area, however, the principal is working on improving this area of the school.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The leadership of the school has been able to provide strong and effective changes that have made an immediate impact at the school. The principal has a clear vision, high expectations and a good understanding of how to use data to drive instruction. His leadership and vision has allowed the school to set broad goals and monitor the progress made in credit accumulation, Regents' exam results and attendance rate. The constant monitoring of the graduating cohort and consequent revisions to the students' courses are expected to raise the graduation rate by over 15% when compared to last year. The structures adopted by the school for improving attendance has already put them on track to increase the overall attendance for the year by at least 2.5%.

The school's performance in this area is underdeveloped, although there are some examples of good practices upon which it can build. The school is working on narrowing the priorities for next school year and making additional improvements to the systems already in place, while implementing new systems to capture student level data for each student in both English language arts and math. The school has started to develop its own periodic assessments and is implementing the Department of Education's assessments. It is beginning to look at item analyses to determine the strengths and needs of all students and to monitor students' progress throughout the course of the year.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Unity Center for Urban Technology	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 make 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