



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Division of Performance and Accountability
2010-2011**

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

University Neighborhood Middle School

Intermediate School M332

**220 Henry Street
New York, New York
NY 10002**

Principal: Laura Peynado-Castro

Dates of review: February 7- 8, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Myrta Rivera

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

University Neighborhood is a middle school with 119 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 24% Black, 70% Hispanic, 1% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 35% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 89.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders effectively align resources and make organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and long-term plans.
 - Through the successful school based option (SBO), the "Book Club" program provides students with additional time three times a week to read books in a gender friendly environment. Students have input in the books selected in order to support students' long-term love of reading. The average instructional reading level went from 6.06 in September to 6.74 in January. During the same time, higher performing students take Regents courses. As a result, four students are now attending specialized high schools and all students receive an extra 150 minutes of instructional time.
 - All special education teachers benefit from one content area assignment to work collaboratively in grade and subject teams so teachers can plan rigorous instruction in teacher teams. At these team meetings, teachers hold themselves accountable for their students' progress while sharing their knowledge of the content area. These practices allows for consistency of instruction by grade and content area for all students and effective planning for teachers.
- The entire school community works collaboratively to create a respectful learning environment that supports the academic and social emotional needs of students.
 - The culture and climate of this small school allows for mutual trust and respect for the entire school community. The school collects and monitors data daily such as live on-line section sheets, incident reports, attendance and suspensions. The peer mediation program, the uniform policy and weekly town hall meetings provide students with strategies to develop their academic and social emotional goals. Because of these strategies, the number of incidents has decreased by 70% compared to this time last year.
 - Students enjoy school and one student said, "It feels like a second home." Student advisories provide support staff an opportunity to address students' emotional needs and allow students to practice skills to help them in the real world. As a result, students are able to speak to adults comfortably and adults can address their academic and social issues as they arise.
- School leaders and faculty effectively use a wide range of data to identify school trends, strengths, and areas of need that support school improvement.
 - School leaders and teachers conduct a comprehensive review of data including student work that highlights the need to emphasize writing in all subjects. The school's instructional goal that all students publish at least one informational writing piece in every content area addresses this weakness. Teacher teams develop writing rubrics to create a seamless assessment tool that monitors student writing.
 - School leaders and teachers identified math instruction as a concern from classroom and periodic assessment data. As a result, additional time is added to the math program in all grades and enrichment activities are offered during and after school to support student achievement. The curriculum infuses writing in both literacy and math work in support of the school goals.

- School leaders and teachers use tools effectively to analyze and make decisions about student performance and progress to improve student achievement.
 - Administration effectively uses Google docs spreadsheets to document and inform staff of the needs of students. The school uses a paperless system where staff receives student data on line. This system allows instant access, among other data, to monitor the performance of boys versus the girls in the Book Club program and progress towards meeting the reading goal.
 - Teachers create spreadsheets on-line to document student performance then share it with colleagues and administration. Every teacher owns a laptop computer and documents progress at the classroom level instantly. The Humanities teachers share results of their own assessments with each other in order to plan or modify the next lesson together.
- The principal articulates a clear vision for the school with support from a vast majority of staff to create a vibrant learning environment that supports increased academic achievement.
 - School goals, aligned to the Comprehensive Educational Plan, have a clear message of improvement in attendance, increase in academic performance and support for social growth that will enable students to enter and succeed in high school. As a result, all initiatives are viewed through this lens and all school constituents are invested.
 - School leaders involve teachers, students and families in goal setting and action planning through effective use of blogs, emails and retreats sponsored by New York University. The entire school community supports the direction of the school as documented in the Learning Environment survey where 100% of staff, parents and students support the goals and direction of the school.
- The school has developed a system of improving instructional practice that focuses on professional growth aligned to the school's instructional goals.
 - The school shares a common instructional focus using essential questions, a focus on writing and small group work in a collaborative school culture. Instructional rounds provide a common framework for teams of teachers to focus on an instructional practice and share feedback. The impact of this work, documented in the Learning Environment Survey, indicates all teachers feel supported and the principal has confidence in their expertise.
 - The school offers differentiated professional development by sending teachers to conferences where teachers share information during team meetings. Teachers write goals and action plans with benchmarks, and school leaders meet individually with teachers to discuss these goals and measure progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen differentiated instructional strategies that lead to high levels of student engagement so that every lesson enables all students to make progress.
 - Some classrooms offer various levels of grouping and activities based on the ability of the students using data to inform instruction. However, differentiation of

instruction that includes varied questioning and strategies to facilitate higher order thinking, extends learning and use students' learning styles to promote high level of interaction do not occur consistently throughout the school.

- In some classes students do not engage in accountable talk to share their voice on topics. Consequently, this inconsistent level of engagement across classes does not push students to develop critical thinking skills in order to improve academic performance.
- Strengthen rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills in a coherent way across grades and subjects in lesson planning to close the achievement gap.
 - The school has aligned the curricula to State standards and has begun the work of aligning it to the Common Core Standards with a focus on writing and creating essential questions as part of lesson development in literacy. However, the curricula is not yet aligned across all grades or subjects. This limits the school's efforts to build student proficiency across all content area and
 - Academic task for English language learners are not rigorous. Even though the school uses data to create programs where students work in small groups, the student work products shows low levels of thinking. This lack of support for these students can limit their growth.
- Expand the practice of creating differentiated learning goals for student subgroups and students in need of additional support to accelerate their learning.
 - Teachers review and monitor student class data frequently. However, there are no learning goals for groups of students to accelerate their learning, thereby missing an opportunity to provide additional supports to these students in order to master the instructional material, and monitor their progress.
 - The Book Club Remedial program groups students by gender into groups of ten to fifteen students based on reading levels. Teachers confer with students to determine their differentiated learning goals so that students can accelerate their reading ability. However, the school does not establish differentiated learning goals for individual or student subgroups in all subjects, thereby missing opportunities to ensure their success by adjusting classroom practices.
- Strengthen teacher's feedback to student work and increase communication with families to support student learning needs and outcomes.
 - The school provides progress reports to parents that include academic performance and student behavior, but lack information on next steps to assist their children at home. Teachers' comments on student's published work include comments like "try to write neater and more legible" with very few comments that would improve the content of student writing. The lack of guiding comments and rubrics do not assist students with identifying their next steps for improvement.
 - One teacher effectively used a class rubric to assist students in gauging their own level of understanding and another asked students to form groups based on their level of understanding. However, this practice is not widespread, thereby missing an opportunity for students to take control of their learning.

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|---|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| School name: University Neighborhood Middle School | UD | D | P | WD |
| Overall QR Score | | | X | |
| Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions. | | | | |
| <i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i> | UD | D | P | WD |
| 1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards? | | | X | |
| 1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products? | | X | | |
| 1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs? | | | | X |
| 1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults? | | | | X |
| Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time. | | | | |
| <i>To what extent does the school ...</i> | UD | D | P | WD |
| 2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level? | | | | X |
| 2.2 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level? | | | X | |
| 2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends? | | | | X |
| 2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes? | | X | | |

| Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning. | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| <i>To what extent does the school ...</i> | UD | D | P | WD | | | |
| 3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community? | | | | X | | | |
| 3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support? | | X | | | | | |
| 3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level? | | | X | | | | |
| 3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community? | | | X | | | | |
| Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs. | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent does the school...</i> | UD | D | P | WD | | | |
| 4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers? | | | X | | | | |
| 4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning? | | | X | | | | |
| 4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes? | | | X | | | | |
| 4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students? | | | X | | | | |
| Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning. | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent does the school...</i> | UD | D | P | WD | | | |
| 5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school? | | | X | | | | |
| 5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school? | | | X | | | | |
| 5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time? | | | X | | | | |
| 5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies? | | | X | | | | |
| Quality Review Scoring Key | | | | | | | |
| UD | Underdeveloped | D | Developing | P | Proficient | WD | Well Developed |