

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

University Neighborhood High School

**High School 448
200 Monroe Street
Manhattan
NY 10002**

Principal: Elizabeth Collins

**Dates of review: March 2 - 3, 2011
Lead Reviewer: Deena Abu-Lughod**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

University Neighborhood High School has 486 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 26% Black, 47% Hispanic, 4% White, and 23% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 84.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders ably gather and analyze data to make intelligent organizational and programming decisions that impact positively on student achievement and graduation rates.
 - Ongoing analyses of a comprehensive range of data help the administration reinforce school strengths and target areas of need. To address low literacy skills, it purchased a computer based reading program, which is highly effective in the English language learner classes, and serves students with individualized education plans and other at-risk learners. To improve pass rates in global history, second year students now take an additional global literature course and math curricula were transformed to increase college readiness. Scrutiny of individual transcripts ensure that students are programmed for the exact courses they need for graduation and all staff mentor one senior through any remaining exams or credits. Dozens of higher achieving students are earning college credits at universities, while new modules for credit recovery are getting more students on a college track. A new policy that requires students to retake Regents exams when they score below 75 has resulted in 17 seniors on track for advanced Regents diplomas for the first time.
- Resources are aligned thoughtfully to foster teacher collaboration and shared accountability for students in support of the school's goals.
 - Schedules are designed purposefully to enable teachers to meet weekly at the grade and department level to examine student needs and collaborate to adequately design well-matched plans. Having identified student absenteeism as the greatest obstacle to success, the grade 10 team is targeting 30 students with whom they meet weekly to set and monitor progress on short-term goals. This has allowed them to evaluate the success of their behavioral interventions with a view to contributing to school wide policy development. Space has been rearranged so that students can access all social, community, and college supports on one floor, and all ninth grade classes are located on another floor to create the sense of a smaller, supportive community for a smooth transition to high school.
- Ambitious goals and effective monitoring systems enable the school to make and revise curricular decisions to set students on a path towards greater success.
 - The new leadership led staff, students, and parents through a thorough analysis of three years of attendance, behavioral and achievement data during a summer retreat. This process is followed by yearlong consultations and work by a faculty task force to develop a restructuring plan to which the school community is committed.
 - Clear, school wide goals, such as a 10% increase in course and Regents' pass rates, are reflected in every department, and serve as benchmarks for evaluating student progress, programming decisions, and teacher effectiveness. As a result, clear criteria are evident for comparing growth between the six marking periods, and from year to year, to make necessary adjustments, such as the separation of humanities to distinguish the strength in literacy. January-to-January comparisons of scholarship and Regents' data indicate the school is on track to make its goals.

Parents note with satisfaction the school's higher expectations where the principal "is all about accountability."

- Frequent, purposeful professional development opportunities align to school goals to enable teachers to assume leadership and improve practice.
 - All teachers engage in monthly intervisitations, using a protocol to debrief and to commit to incorporating a new learning. As a result, there is greater openness about practice, which impacts positively on the professional culture. A newly recruited math teacher hosts the network's math lab site, while other lead teachers visit network lab sites to learn best practices to share at weekly departmental meetings. As a result, there is evidence in all classrooms of some differentiation and teachers can articulate their aspirations in this area.
 - Teacher leadership is encouraged as part of a deliberate plan to build adult capacity. Teachers effectively use protocols and strict timekeeping to lead their own teams and have regular opportunities to report on their progress so they share ownership of curricula and instructional decisions.
- The supervisory process provides precise and actionable feedback to teachers to generate greater coherence in instructional practice.
 - With a clear vision of quality instruction, the new principal has made professional development a priority. There has been significant turnover in staff, creating opportunities to recruit experienced teachers to bolster the math department and to support the growing proportion of Chinese students. New teachers learn from buddy teachers, and there is a fully calendar of opportunities provided by external providers so all teachers can meet their goals by building skills in data analysis and differentiated instruction. Using a protocol for observation, leaders provide feedback aligned to teacher goals, and monitor individual and overall trends in instruction to evaluate the impact of its multiple professional development opportunities.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance the curriculum development underway to include deliberate planning of high-level tasks so that students are prepared for the rigors of college and the workplace.
 - Over the summer, teachers used the standards to create curriculum maps in all courses and the school has skillfully reconfigured math curricula, which it sees as the gatekeeper to college. However, tasks embedded in daily lessons in both social studies and many English classes lack sufficient rigor to prepare students adequately for success on the Regents and beyond. Few courses require substantive reading, writing, or research, even in the new, more advanced courses, that students indicated lacked rigor.
- Build on good practices in differentiation and active engagement so students at every level of achievement are suitably supported and challenged within the classroom.
 - Classroom practices reveal that the school's efforts to embed differentiation have had some impact, with excellent implementation in some math, English and second language classes. However, the range of integrated co-teaching strategies are not used, especially in social studies, thus preventing students from benefitting fully from the presence of additional second language and special education teachers. Pacing of lessons varies considerably across classrooms, and teachers are at different

levels in their ability to craft tasks with appropriate levels of challenge, leaving some students unengaged.

- Extend emerging youth development supports to serve the social-emotional needs of a wider range of students to build a culture of higher achievement.
 - The administration has worked diligently to improve the climate of the school, and parents and students are pleased with the increased number of cultural celebrations that they have planned and led, and with the creation of a student council and a peer-tutoring program. However, because of communication gaps and instability in disciplinary personnel, students do not yet feel the impact of changes in this area, and state that inconsistent policies towards behavior, uniforms, and lateness undermine school tone. With the small guidance department and external partnerships focused on at-risk cases, many dedicated students do not yet have a structure with which to connect on a regular basis to receive support from a caring adult.
- Expand the use of tools to support students' ability to engage in self-reflective practice and engage parents more actively as partners in student achievement.
 - After a successful pilot program, Snapgrades was selected as the principal method of sharing progress with students and their families. While over 90% of 11th and 12th graders use the system, usage is lower in other grades, and some teachers post data irregularly. Although parent training is planned, only a third of them have used the system and most rely on report cards that provide few details about why students are successful or not, therefore limiting the impact of the home-school link.
 - One science teacher very effectively engages students in analyzing their own test data, which helps students set databased learning goals. Most students in other classes have less awareness of their particular strengths and areas for growth and use rubrics inconsistently as a tool for reflection and self-management of learning. As a result, students do not routinely act on feedback and have difficulty explaining what they are working on.
- Strengthen structures for evaluating assessment and grading practices to ensure that these fully align with the standards so the school community has accurate and robust measures of achievement.
 - New grading policies instituted this year create greater coherence within and between departments, and courses that are now annualized maximize opportunities for student success. However, standards-aligned assessments comprise only 35% of the course grades, and not all projects and homework assignments are substantive, diminishing the reliability of classroom grades as measures of achievement. Item analyses of Regents' exams are not conducted uniformly across departments, reducing the school's ability to refine teacher-made assessments, curricula, and instruction based on these important data sources. Because the school's system for sharing information with families is in its infancy, students and their families are still learning how to use it most effectively.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: University Neighborhood High 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
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