

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

University Neighborhood High School

High School 448

**200 Monroe Street
Manhattan
NY 10002**

Principal: Elizabeth Collins

Dates of review: February 13 - 14, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Victoria Armas

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

University Neighborhood High School is a high school with 394 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 23% Black, 46% Hispanic, 2% White, and 29% Asian students. The student body includes 21% 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 2011 - 2012 was 84.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's comprehensive curriculum aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) is refined according to student work and data to ensure college and career readiness. (1.1)
 - Across all grades and subject areas, unit plans are organized according to Understanding by Design (UbD) principles, and are planned to expose students to complex literature and higher order thinking. Instructional expectations for students include writing persuasive and argument essays supported by evidence, and the development of strong math concepts to promote college and career readiness. The school's offer of an Algebra course and a Statistics course in the ninth grade provides opportunities for students to develop a strong foundation in math during their freshman year. A Global Literature course was added to support an area of need identified on the Global Regents exam. Additionally, courses in the arts, advanced placement United States history, honors English courses, and college courses for credit, provide for a rich curriculum that addresses the needs of all students. This focused curriculum work has resulted in an improvement in the graduation rate from 48.8% in 2010 to 74.4% as of August 2012.
 - Units that are aligned to CCLS are developed by teachers, and then are reviewed by colleagues and school leaders using a rubric to provide feedback to guide suitable revisions. Unit plans that are detailed include a range of literature to address diverse student abilities, including leveled texts and translations in Spanish and Chinese. Student work is analyzed on a weekly basis by teacher teams to adjust curriculum and instruction according to student work using the Modified Consultancy Protocol. Math teachers from the ninth and tenth grade team presented a piece of student work and analyzed it. Then via a discussion using the protocol identified the student's ability to understand the math concept and the struggle to express the reasoning for the answer in writing using analytical thought. As a result teachers discussed the supports that could be implemented across content areas to achieve an improved outcome. Furthermore, upon collective review of student work, teachers make suggestions to each other to modify curriculum or adapt strategies to address areas where support is needed, especially for English language learners (ELLs) and Students with Disabilities (SWDs).
- Assessment practices and continuous data analysis across the school determine student progress toward goals and guide instructional decisions that lead to improved student achievement. (2.2)
 - Data including scholarship reports, item analysis of benchmark assessments, individual student analysis of assessment outcomes, student goals and progress, teacher goals aligned to observation reports and feedback, as well as Jupiter Grades online information are collected, compiled and analyzed. Students create academic goals based on their transcripts using school designed templates and re-visit, reflect upon, and revise them at structured checkpoints yearlong at every marking period.

Additionally, students indicated that the goals are reviewed during advisory periods each week, and they record a reflection on where improvement needs to occur. Student work in portfolios and on bulletin boards reflected comments on post-its according to the common rubrics in use. The use of Jupiter Grades, an online grade book, is utilized by the majority of students and families, which provides feedback and current information regarding student progress. These structures result in actionable next steps for teachers and students.

- The school was awarded a Periodic Assessment grant to develop common benchmark assessments aligned to CCLS and Regents' exams. Teachers then reflect on the outcomes from these assessments and along with scholarship data that is item analyzed and reviewed relative to individual student's performance, adjust instructional practices accordingly. One pattern that emerged from the analysis of benchmark assessments was the need to further support students in the reading of texts and documents on the Global Regents' exam, so a course in global literature was added to the school's program. Patterns and trends from the benchmark assessments that are tracked and color-coded on spreadsheets are shared and discussed with students, teachers, and school leaders, leading to a clear understanding by all constituents of student progress.
- The school community has an effective system in place to nurture professional growth through constant feedback and targeted support that elevates instructional practice. (4.1)
 - The school leaders observe lessons daily and provide feedback to teachers that is specific, actionable, and followed-up in subsequent classroom visits. Frequent walkthroughs are conducted and school leaders keep logs of this information. Observation reports refer to feedback provided during prior visits and note progress made by the teacher based on the previous recommendations. A mentoring program supports new teachers that coupled with structured opportunities for collaboration, shape their instructional practices. As a data centered community, student scholarship reports are used during feedback sessions after classroom observations in order to connect student outcomes to instructional practices. Teachers indicated that they welcome regular classroom visits and feedback on their instruction and feel they have many ways to be supported in order to promote their professional growth.
 - A template based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching details evidence collected during an observation according to five focus competencies, and also includes recommendations from the school leader and reflections from the teacher regarding challenges and next steps. Teachers are responsible for developing two sets of goals, one that is aligned to school wide goals, and another related to the identified Danielson competencies. School leaders then revisit goals with teachers during feedback sessions, look at pertinent student data, and revise goals if achieved. Intervisitations to support teacher development are conducted weekly, and are debriefed as part of the structured teacher team schedule. Consultant coaches support English language arts (ELA) and math teachers to reach professional and school-wide goals. Weekly professional development is conducted by grade leaders according to

topics that teachers and school leaders deem necessary such as interpreting data from benchmark exams, book studies, or support for unit planning using UbD principles, resulting in a collaborative community where all teachers are supported to reach their professional goals.

- Structured teacher teamwork across grades and content areas results in improved teacher capacity and student learning. (4.2)
 - Weekly teacher team meetings across grade levels and content areas are configured in a variety of structures. Student level social/emotional concerns, information, and data are shared among teachers during grade level meetings on Tuesdays, and result in additional support and intervention. Intervisitations are conducted by teachers individually and in small groups on Wednesdays, and then debriefed at subsequent teacher team meetings. Thursdays allow for content area teachers to meet to review student work during which time they use a protocol to present and discuss student strengths and areas of need, and then they make instructional adaptations to curriculum and instruction. Teachers stated that they are able to support student struggles in other content areas as they become aware of issues during teacher team discussions. One teacher affirmed that teacher teams are “a great open line of communication to troubleshoot”. Teachers indicated that their work on teams has impacted their practices through the sharing of effective approaches to instruction that support student learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen instructional practices to strategically provide multiple entry points to ensure that all learners are engaged in challenging tasks and higher order thinking. (1.2)
 - Most lessons include instructional practices and strategies including leveled texts, paired activities, small group work, debates, translation, and a variety of graphic organizers to address the needs of groups of students. High-level instructional materials including relevant articles, complex texts, and leveled reading materials are available. Materials and activities reflect real world applications, including articles of interest to high school students to support argument writing. This included information on downloading music, the benefits of bilingualism, and grading policies. Although curriculum is rigorously designed, sufficient strategic supports were not evident in some classrooms, which hinders the engagement of all students, especially sub-group populations.
 - The majority of classroom instruction observed included lessons that promote higher order thinking skills. Examples include a Parliamentary debate in a social studies class, College Now coursework resulting in college credit, and during an ELA class the coding of text to indicate the types of evidence to support a claim, (positive, negative or cause/effect), in a relevant article. Classrooms were organized consistently to include grading policy, word walls, exemplary student work bulletin boards, and interdisciplinary academic language used in directions specific to the content area of the room. Although student work products and participation reflect high levels of thinking, students were not always able to provide a rationale for the objective of the lesson or how the learning

might connect or be applied to another context, thus limiting the ability to own the learning and take responsibility for growth in order to progress toward more meaningful and even higher levels of work.

- Expand opportunities to engage all school constituencies in personalizing support for social-emotional learning in order to build on students' effective academic and personal behaviors. (1.4)
 - The school's weekly advisory period allows advisors to connect with students and support their social emotional development as well as progress toward academic goals. Students indicated that the school is small enough that they feel they have a "go to" person who can support them or direct them to someone who can. Attendance data is monitored and supports are in place to outreach to families on the days students are absent from school. Grand Street Settlement facilitates an Attendance Improvement and Dropout Prevention (AIDP) program, a community based organization (CBO), for approximately 50 students, personalizing support to students for improved attendance. Teachers conduct a discussion of social-emotional progress of students, interventions, and supports, during grade level meetings with guidance counselors and CBO social workers. Although adults in the building share responsibility for students through a distributive system so that all students are well known by all staff, the school does not yet provide a full range of specific social emotional support for ELLs and SWDs thus missing out on bolstering their ability to achieve to their full potential.
 - Expectations from the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program are posted in hallways and classrooms and taught during advisories. In addition, the school psychologist and guidance counselors support the identification of student behaviors that could be cause for concern and provide professional development. During Tuesday grade level meetings when student academic and social emotional progress is discussed, parents of students under discussion, as well as the students themselves are included. The social worker affiliated with Grand Street Settlement has an office on site and interacts with students throughout the school day. There is also an on-site college office with advisors from New York University as well as the Grand Street Settlement. However, parents indicated that more workshops and information is needed, particularly regarding college admission, and how to support effective academic and personal behaviors. Parents stated that no structures were in place to support families in order to understand data other than offerings provided through the ARIS parent link. The limited involvement and support of families hinders parents' ability to partner with the school to help their children strengthen the academic and personal behaviors required to be ready for college and careers.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: University Neighborhood High School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			X				
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			X				
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X				
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed