

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Talent Unlimited High School

High school 519

**317 East 67 Street
Manhattan
NY 10021**

Principal: Linda Hamil

Dates of review: January 14 – 15, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Anthony R. Lodico

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Talent Unlimited is a high school with 491 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 36% Black, 39% Hispanic, 20% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 0% English language learners and 4% special education students. Boys account for 21% of the students enrolled and girls account for 79%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 91.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

What the school does well

- Students benefit from rigorous, Common Core Standards aligned curricula and tasks including a wide array of arts courses which promote high levels of thinking that prepare them for college and career. (1.1)
 - School leaders and teachers make purposeful decisions aligning Common Core aligned curricula with rigorous tasks that clearly address the citywide instructional shifts. Across all disciplines including the arts, students are expected to develop rigorous evidence-based written and oral arguments. Accountable talk, determining text-based evidence, project-based learning and a commitment to arts infusion are evident across classrooms. For example, in an engineering class, students were testing the integrity of the toothpick bridges they built and had to defend their bridge design and were expected to explain why they chose it. Also, in a ninth grade Vocal Foundations class, students responded orally and in writing providing effective, actionable feedback as they critiqued peer performances. Students report that the inclusion of arts-based assignments and projects has improved their performance levels since entering high school. Arts infusion, coupled with the new “Rising Stars” initiative addresses the needs of all learners. Rising Stars is an additional support mechanism to ensure that struggling learners are given supports needed both in and out of the classroom. It is designed to ensure support from student mentors as well as strategic classroom interventions from teachers. English, Global history and mathematics high Regents pass rates and scholarship reports coupled with consistently high attendance rates of over 90% along with the current work of students provide multiple streams of evidence that they are consistently high performing in college readiness skills and content.
- School leaders make informed, purposeful and effective organizational decisions that maximize student and adult learning resulting in elevated teacher practice and student performance. (1.3)
 - The use of resources is well aligned to the school’s mission and goals. For example, the school has an extensive array of partnerships that complement and enhance the performing arts focus of the school. The partnerships include Martha Graham, Neighborhood Playhouse, Theater Development Fund and Exploring the Arts. These partnerships, along with the work of the Arts Infusion teacher team, align with and support the school’s mission of promoting “students as citizen artists.” A citizen artist is encouraged to immerse themselves in their love of the arts, excel academically, prepare for college and career, and to “always be ready, willing and able to lend a helping hand.” As a result, a 12th grade student, for example, touted the rigor and high expectations of the vocal program and his academic classes as excellent preparation for acceptance to arts colleges.
 - Department teams meet three or four days per week to review student work, analyze data, debrief about the effectiveness of intervention strategies, develop Common Core aligned tasks and revise and create curriculum maps. Additionally, some teachers

serve on the Teacher Effectiveness Team, Arts Infusion Team or an Advisory Creation Team. The administration monitors the work of the teams and meets regularly with the network support team to plan for ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers and staff. As a result of the continuous teacher/administration/network collaborations and the close monitoring of student work and outcomes, instructional practices have strengthened, thereby increasing student engagement, consistent accountable talk, and improved work products.

- Students and families appreciate the school's highly focused efforts to sustain a safe, respectful and inclusive environment that supports student achievement and success. (1.4)
 - As a result of the school's commitment to arts education, college and career readiness, arts infusion and partnerships, students and adults enjoy a vibrant and rigorous standards-based education. In addition to systems that are in place to support student academic and social-emotional growth, such as counseling, parent communication and involvement, the administrative team is constantly analyzing data and addressing areas to improve upon. For example, most recently, the "Rising Star" initiative was developed as an outgrowth of the successful ARISTA mentoring program. The program was expanded upon to target the "middle of the road" student and to support them in specific academic areas where they may be struggling. Student voices are heard via student council and students report that they have access to school leaders and are challenged in both academic subjects and the arts. There is a commitment to college readiness and students are supported through that process. For example, there is a summer orientation program for all grade levels focusing on college readiness and preparation. In addition, additional SAT mathematics electives and a College Now Statistics course have been added to course offerings. Student and parent voices are heard through School Leadership Team, Student Council and Parents' Association. Participation in these venues and communication with student leaders lead to the implementation of initiatives and programs aimed at increasing student achievement. Specifically, the infusion of the arts and the implementation of the Rising Stars Program have increased motivation, student engagement and self regulation.
- Coupled with teachers' frequent checks for understanding, formative, interim and summative data are used to analyze student performance, modify curriculum and instruction, and accelerate student growth. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams regularly use item analysis, looking at student work, rubric review and revision, and departmental goal setting to monitor and measure students' academic growth. These formative methods of assessment are used in conjunction with summative data analysis that monitor student progress in writing, problem solving and using evidence to support claims and counter claims. In the English department, there is a focus on developing student proficiency in "accountable talk." Similarly, the mathematics department has also included a focus on "math talk." For example, across classrooms teachers frequently assess student understanding through skillful questioning, turn and talks, share-outs and student presentations. Additionally, student peer and self-assessments provide clear and achievable next learning steps for students to take their work to the next level.

- School leaders, teachers, staff, parents, partners and students support and contribute to a culture of high expectations and a deep commitment to excellence in academics and arts education. (3.4)
 - In addition to the work that has been ongoing in regard to teacher effectiveness, the work has expanded this year with the formation of the teacher effectiveness team. The Danielson framework has been the basis for walkthroughs done by the administrative team and now strengthened by the addition of intervisitation among teachers as well. Feedback from these visits is used to develop goals and actionable steps to continue to improve instruction and pedagogy. Additionally, the high expectations for students are communicated to families and students via a variety of forums. It is the belief and a value of the Talent Unlimited community that all artists will be college and career ready and be immersed in rigorous tasks and curricula. There is a summer orientation focusing on college preparedness and readiness for students and the Parents' Association is an integral part of the process as well. It was through student, parent and staff collaboration that additional programs were brought to the school to support the culture of high expectations, commitment to the arts and to college preparedness. The school has seen improvement in credit accumulation and maintenance of a four year graduation rate of over 95% as evidence of their ongoing efforts.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that teaching strategies and academic tasks provide high quality supports and extensions into the curricula fostering higher order thinking and rigorous work products that result in increased opportunities for student ownership of learning. (1.2)
 - Across classrooms, including the arts, teachers are creating rigorous tasks that are aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards, engaging students in higher order thinking through questioning and writing assignments calling for evidence to support claims or refute counterclaims. For example, in an English classroom, students were expected to use textual evidence from a variety of related non-fiction articles to support their opinions while responding to questioning regarding a novel being read. However, some teachers do not provide appropriate extensions through more strategic questioning to support all learners in deepening their learning and thus reaching their full potential. This limits some students' achievement. Furthermore, although tasks and lessons facilitates student participation, student-to-student discussion and dialogue, questions of high cognitive challenge are not yet consistently formulated by students and lessons are not always guided by student inquiry. Hence, student work products do not always reflect high levels of thinking and ownership.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Talent Unlimited 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