



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

New Utrecht

High School 445

**1601 80 STREET
BROOKLYN
NY, 11214**

Principal: MAUREEN GOLDFARB

Dates of review: Dec 4 - 5, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

New Utrecht is a high school with 3289 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 5% Black, 28% Hispanic, 31% White, and 38% Asian students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 81.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's curricula, which are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), content standards, and instructional shifts, promote college and career readiness for all students. (1.1)
 - The school's uses the Association of Mathematics Assistant Principals' (AMAPS) curricula, which are modified to emphasize dual intensity, specifically as it relates to solving multistep problems. Members of the math team revisit the scope and sequence of these curricula to meaningfully incorporate CCLS as they continue to prepare many of their students for the Regents exam. In English language arts (ELA) and social studies, there is purposeful emphasis on increasing the amount of informational text that students read, as well as promoting writing from sources. Given the increasing numbers of English language learners (ELL), emphasis is being given to student use of academic vocabulary. English as a second language (ESL) teachers were observed in a planning meeting designing an activity where students would generate their own questions based on a science text read. The questions would then inform small group discussions. The ESL teachers continually referred back to CCLS reading and writing standards as they worked toward clarity in their design. Such practices evidence how teachers make intentional adjustments to their curricula to ensure that all students are being challenged with rigorous tasks in a manner that meets them at their current skill level while pushing them toward mastery and college and career readiness.
- The principal makes strategic organizational decisions utilizing resources to support the attainment of school goals, with emphasis on student and adult learning. (1.3)
 - Resources are consistently utilized to ensure that the diverse student population is getting all that it needs to ensure achievement. The principal allocates per session dollars to support Regents prep, credit recovery programs on Saturdays, and to provide teachers with additional opportunities to meet after school to plan. The school has invested in Skedula, which has a Pupil Path function allowing parents and students to check on their academic progress from home. Though the school has only had the program for a month, parents are excited about using it with frequency for the marking periods to come. Achieve 3000 was acquired to accelerate the learning and credit accumulation of up to 250 students per term. One of the most valued uses of space is the academic department resource rooms. ELA, math, science, social studies and foreign language, all have their own rooms allocated for teacher team meetings, department specific professional development, student tutoring, and curricular planning meetings. Parents, students, and teachers spoke to the effectiveness of these rooms as places where students know they can go for extra help over the course of the day. Thus, the school's use of per session funds, technology, and space, have all resulted in students having more opportunities for obtaining the support they need to meet graduation requirements and become college ready.

- Approximately 400 more ninth graders were enrolled in the incoming class in September 2013 than anticipated. The additional moneys that came with the higher register supported the principal's hiring of a number of new staff, including highly qualified special education teachers, English as a second language teachers, a Cantonese speaking bilingual ESL teacher, an attendance teacher, and additional guidance counselors. These new positions were prioritized specifically to meet the needs of the growing number of ELL students and students with disabilities. A music teacher and an art teacher were also hired. One of the biggest assets to this large comprehensive high school is its ability to accommodate flexible, individualized programming for all of its students. The school runs a night school program four days per week that allows hundreds of students to take classes that they need to graduate on time. Student schedules reflect each student's credit accumulation needs, resulting in keeping many students on track to graduate and giving others a competitive high school transcript for college application. For example the schedule of a student with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) showed that he was taking two courses in an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) learning environment as well as two other core content subjects in a non-ICT setting. Another student's academic strengths were prioritized as she was enrolled in three Advanced Placement (AP) classes and one non-AP course. Additionally, teachers are programmed to serve as on-call tutors in the academic department resource room, so there is someone available to assist students during every period. The school's strategic hiring, creative programming of students, and purposeful scheduling of teachers, result in a systematic allocation of resources that meets students' learning needs in an individualized manner.
- The school's safe and nurturing environment supports the academic, social, and emotional development of all students. (1.4)
 - The school of over three thousand students and two hundred staff, including school safety agents, operates as a collaborative community, providing all constituencies with voice as necessary to support the institution's goal of educating college and career ready graduates. The Assistant Principal of Safety and the school's deans work as a team with school safety agents to ensure that adult presence is strategically sustained throughout the building. In addition, the mayor of the student council spoke of a number of initiatives that were brought to the attention of the school's administration on the behalf of students. This resulted in the requests coming to fruition including, additional clubs, a trip to Europe for interested seniors, new instruments for the band, and the establishment of a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and a Questioning group. Peer mediators are available to negotiate conflict resolution as needed. All twelve guidance counselors "move" with their assigned students as they progress through their high school experience ensuring consistency of adult support from matriculation through graduation. A Spanish speaking guidance counselor and Cantonese speaking guidance counselor who were added to the staff this year reflect the school's response to the growing number of students with these native languages. The school's robust support services staffing is aligned to the desire to meet the needs of the diverse student population and ensure their academic success. These support services, along with the adult commitment to student safety and having a systematic means for student leadership and voice, have all contributed to a 60% decrease in

the number of student suspensions between September and November of this year as compared to last year during the same time.

- Teachers receive feedback and professional development, based on observation data that provides clear next steps and builds capacity. (4.1)
 - All teachers are regularly observed and provided with Danielson aligned actionable feedback from their core content specific assistant principal (AP). While doing classroom visits, the math AP noted in one debrief that there were missed opportunities for students to engage one another in a quick yet meaningful pair-share prior to beginning independent work. The social studies AP referred to the Danielson domains and components directly when sharing the feedback he would provide a teacher when he stated, “When I look at Domain 2, students were definitely respectful and engaged, but when it comes to Domain 3, I would like to see more checks for understanding.” Samples of written feedback also reflect alignment to Danielson. An ADVANCE write up done by the ELA AP showed not only low inference evidence chunked by Danielson components, but also additional next steps outlined at the bottom of the document. ELA teachers mentioned that their AP’s feedback often comes with sample handouts and references to websites whose content builds on the suggestions presented in the write-up. Such focused feedback provides teaching staff with the explicit next steps needed to bring about professional growth within a school-wide framework.
 - Data from classroom observations is used by both school administration and teacher leaders to inform professional development opportunities for teachers. Core content APs work to identify content specific professional development sessions off-site and in many cases will accompany teachers to ensure accountability and follow through on acquired skills. APs also design workshops for their department teams to be facilitated during designated afterschool sessions. On the last day of the Quality Review, the math team was scheduled to focus their learning on multiple entry points. In addition, general pedagogical areas for growth are provided by the APs to the Professional Development Team (PD Team), which designs sessions on Department of Education conference days and is comprised of an instructional coach and lead teachers. Teachers, whose classrooms are designated as model classes for practices that are the foci of trainings, often facilitate professional development sessions. Consequently, the effective use of data collected during classroom observations is used to strategically provide professional development opportunities, contributing to the staff’s ongoing pedagogical growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that teacher practices consistently reflect rigorous questioning and student-to-student engagement in order to provide all learners with challenging tasks and opportunities for high levels of thinking. (1.2)
 - The school’s beliefs in how students learn best are well aligned to Danielson frameworks Domain 3. The school’s leadership outlined their vision for varied peer-to-peer interaction and rigorous questioning as informed by Webb’s Depth of Knowledge framework. Of the thirteen classes observed which included English language arts, math, social studies, science, English as a second language, visual art, and native

language arts classes, only six of them included questions, either written or verbal that could be considered rigorous. Only five classes included activities where there was any sort of meaningful student-to-student interactions. In cases where these practices were absent, students were engaged in independent work, for example silent sustained reading, but they were not provided with an opportunity to share out their understandings and connections regarding the reading. In other cases, students listened to their teachers and engaged in note taking and other written tasks. This inconsistency in the implementation of the school's pedagogical beliefs, results in students who are not thinking at high levels and generating meaningful products across classrooms.

- Improve assessment practices so that ongoing checks for understanding and actionable feedback result in effective instructional adjustments and increased student awareness of their next learning steps. (2.2)
 - Student work, both posted on bulletin boards, as well as what was found in student folders, reflected inconsistent feedback practices. In some cases student work was marked with checks and a circled numerical score at the top, while other pieces had clear informative feedback in the margins along with suggestions for improvement. While talking to students, those in the AP and honors courses were able to refer to rubrics and other criteria for their work as captured in their notes. However, two struggling students could not explain what the rubric scores they received meant in regards to their writing ability, nor could they speak to how they could improve other than to say, “Pay attention more,” and “study harder”. Such inconsistencies in how students receive actionable feedback result in some students having insufficient ownership of their learning without a clear sense of how to improve.
 - During classroom visits, it was observed that though most teachers ask questions of the class to assess understanding, some even cold calling, there was little evidence of thoughtful checks for understanding, which resulted in purposeful adjustments to instruction. In five classrooms, teachers were observed circulating during independent or group work to support students as needed, but they did not end with bringing the class back together to address a common misunderstanding. In a geometry class, a teacher asked follow up questions such as, “Do you agree with...” but the impact for class-wide understanding was lost, as students were not expected give a signal that communicated their responses to the question. This lack of consistency and depth in checking for understanding does not allow teachers to make the in-the-moment adjustments needed to ensure all students gain an understanding leading to mastery.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: New Utrecht	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 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?			X				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the 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 supports 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 those expectations?			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 student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			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