Quality Review Report

2013-2014

UA Gateway School for Technology

02M507

439 West 49 Street
Manhattan
New York, NY 10019

Principal: April McKoy

Dates of review: March 20, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Joan Prince

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

UA Gateway School for Technology, is a high school with 367 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 34% Black, 52% Hispanic, 5% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 80% of the students enrolled and girls account for 20%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 91.9%.

Overall Evaluation:

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty ensure curriculum is aligned to Common Core (CCLS) and instructional shifts, resulting in coherence across grades, subject areas promoting critical thinking and engagement for all students. (1.1)
    - Summer planning, common planning time, teacher teams collaborate to effectively assess student learning needs to design coherent instruction aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts that encourages student self reflection and engagement in the learning process. The administration and faculty have adopted core curriculum materials to align with their Career and Technical Education Pathway program. This includes Digital Design and Animation Pathways, Information technology and Systems Pathways, and Software Engineering, all which serve to prepare students of current career in software programming and engineering and aligned teacher-designed units of study in Social Studies and Science to incorporate the instructional shifts. The teachers are studying Teach Like a Champion to inform purpose and engagement in the classroom. The school has mapped overarching understandings and essential questions derived from the CCLS that are relevant to multiple subject areas. Robust and reflective scope and sequences articulate the grade by grade curriculum in English language arts and mathematics. Planning documents show that there is school wide embedded Common Core Learning standards in all lesson plans and professional development. Curriculum maps across grades and subjects used by teacher teams use student work and protocols to refine the units and adjust lesson strategies to create access for all students to cognitively engaged. All teachers spent time planning lessons for the school year with lesson plans emphasizing key standards, habits of mind and multiple forms of performance based assessments. Problem formulation/research/interpretation/communication as well as precision/accuracy is the basis of lesson planning. Curriculum binders ensure vertical and horizontal coherence across grades and subjects. This was demonstrated in the multi-unit curriculum of the science teachers, in student work displayed across the school with rubrics and feedback aligned.
    - Across classrooms, students were on track and demonstrating active participation either in groups or pairs, discussing their area of difficulty with the task and working on packets that were scaffolded for their individual needs in favor of a common outcome with the rest of the class. Challenging questions and additional tasks were available to students who advanced quickly. Academic tasks observed ensured that students compare, contrast and analyze sources and positions, not merely summarize and recall facts, procedures and/or algorithms. The school has a GOLD tutoring program that works with small groups for the '11th hours goal' so that Regents deadlines are met. The ninth grade English Language Arts curricula focus on counter claim argument papers, the tenth grade curricula documents showed a focus on using text-based evidence effectively. Mathematics instruction is informed by the Common Core aligned through inquiry in the Algebra curricula. Strategic integration of instructional shifts is evident in all content areas. One mathematical plan had a focus on deep understanding as students were asked to read a word problem, write solve, explain their work, chart their answers and explain to their partner their process. Content area lessons all

align to high levels of student performance and have multiple options for students who struggle or excel. As a result, lowest and highest achieving students articulate that they understand the demands of college and post-secondary experience, the challenging work at school is to help build these skills. As assessed three times a year with the Degrees of Reading Power Program, a holistic measure of reading used for screening, predictive and purposeful monitoring with a non-fiction emphasis, the number of students passing Regents this year increased as compared to last year. In addition, 41% of all juniors are in AP classes and 89% of all students are on track with the appropriate Regent credits.

- The school, across the vast majority of classrooms, in all grades and subjects, uses collaborative, data informed processes to create appropriate on-going planning, rubrics, assessments and goal setting. (2.2)
    - As shown in Teacher Team meetings, there is consistency in how teachers collect, analyze and share feedback with students and other teachers as they adjust lessons and unit planning based on their analysis of students' data. Each content area team, both across grades and subject areas, has an assessment plan that informs the nature of tasks and expected outcomes. There is coherent use of formative assessment date to provide meaningful feedback to students and promote student ownership, accelerating the progress of all learners. Assessments are aligned to create a clear picture of student progress. Teachers meet weekly with grade-level colleagues to norm their scoring of students' performance assessments, which then leads to shared planning of lessons to address learning gaps. Most teachers observed checked for students understanding during lessons with exit slips, 5 minute checks, conferring/conferencing and journal entries. All plans contain writing tasks, leading to a school-wide emphasis on using and developing shared rubrics. Five classes were observed interpreting, deconstructing and/or analyzing rubrics that were using to self-assess their work. Students when questioned were able to refer to the rubrics and identify next steps needed to improve their work based on the score and criteria. This creates a unified, systematic approach to grading as well as to goal setting. Students reflected on their work and spoke to "taking charge of their learning". They also spoke knowledgeably about their next steps.
- School leaders and staff create an engaging school culture that celebrates and encourages student voice, and produces academic strivers who value their school community and one another. (1.4)
    - The principal's instructional focus prioritizes the design of rigorous instruction around individual needs to engage students in tasks and discussions involving evaluation, creation and synthesis of a topic. The school provides a highly functioning learning environment that fosters a college going and professional culture. As students progress throughout the school, their academic performance plays a role in their selection of majors that provide exposure to various industries and careers. Additionally student voice is welcomed and valued as the majority of classroom lessons promote student responsibility and leadership during whole class and small group instruction. The school community aligns professional development, family outreach and student learning experiences resulting in the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors. The student council is an active entity that supports and encourages all students to maintain their academic and personal growth. School leadership theory of action is informed by a shared set of beliefs: the 'UAGA' way: living with core values around CEASAR: Collaboration, Empathy,

Aspiration, Scholarship, Accountability, and Reflection. There is a discipline protocol that creates a successful student-centered school culture. In the School Instructional Guide, school leaders have workshop models for authentic learning across all disciplines and each core value within. This ultimately results in a safe and risk free environment that empower students to try-on different careers and take academic risks. UAG students achieve a 93% passing regents rate in Global Studies and a 100% passing rate on the ELA regents with 72% of those students reaching mastery. As a CTE school the students graduate with 55+ credits and a work internship. Students are on track to successful careers in IT Systems, Software Engineering & Programming, and Digital Design & Animation. Each of these has portfolio and/or exams to gain certification. The school was awarded School Wellness Grant for implementing campus-wide School Wellness Council, and selected as one of nine schools for TealsK-12 Launch that places tech professionals in the classroom as co-teachers to enhance software engineering curriculum and instruction.

- School leader, faculty and staff solicit student voice through a culture of mutual respect and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students through targeted family professional development and family outreach initiatives. There is a Home Visit Program, which is voluntary on the part of the families. Home visits are made to form relationships with families, visits can also occur somewhere in the community so teachers get to have a complete picture to provide the most comprehensive perspective of their students. Student learning experiences are enhanced through Internship Host Sites. These include large companies: i.e. ATT, Lincoln Center, City College of New York-CUNY, and smaller: i.e. Amplify, Brooklyn Robot Foundry and Center for Urban Community Services. There is a UAG Tech Squad that comes in Period 0 to teach students technology. During the review the UAG squad was teaching decoding of systems. Some partnerships are with Baruch College, Borough of Manhattan Community College, Big Brothers, and the Big Sisters work based learning program through American Express. Students fully participate in programs of their choosing to acquire skills to use in the present and in the future. The school is a member of the National Junior Honor Society and the National Federation for Teaching Entrepreneurship, 16% of the student body are members of the National Honors Society. Parents and family members I spoke with confirmed the “family structure” of the school and the inclusive professional development that the school offers to deepen parents understanding of curriculum and important ‘facts’ programs, such as Breast Awareness and Prevention, ROTC/what it is and how it can benefit your child and Goal Oriented Learning Development programs.

- School Leader, faculty and staff constantly convey high expectations that support learning so students achieve success in career readiness, college preparation and reinforce the school’s positive culture. (3.4)
  - School staff has developed clear expectations using advisory and teacher leadership, school action plans/guidebook, to reinforce school wide high expectations. The Danielson Framework serves to build a common understanding related to professional responsibilities, preparation, classroom practice and communication with students to promote academic success. Teachers participate in classroom inter-visitations, co-planning for effective instructional practices and collaborative planning to improve student outcomes. Parent/Teacher Association meetings, workshops on topics connected to college and career readiness promote a strong partnership with

families to ensure that students are on track toward meeting set expectations. Parents stated that they are fully informed regarding their child's learning strengths and weaknesses because of the staff being extremely responsive to communication. Families understand what their children need to accomplish to be successful at their next level of learning and expressed confidence that the school is preparing them for success in college or career readiness. Guidance works with teachers to provide targeted support to students who are struggling both academically and behaviorally. University students from around the New York and tri-State area come to the school on a regular basis to talk to students about college research and personal essays, help with the application process and finalizing their college selections. One parent stated that "my daughter is doing an internship in the field that she wants to study". Another stated that the school offers "real world" opportunities. The school's consistent effort to communicate high expectations has resulted in a culture that is purposefully designed to prepare students for the future, increasing the opportunity for student academic success and career readiness.

- Teacher leaders meet regularly with their grade level teams to discuss instructional practices across grades and subjects. School-wide practices related to curriculum planning and classroom instruction create a culture of mutual accountability in meeting the school's expectations. In addition, school leaders communicate high expectations through faculty conferences, grade conferencing, professional collaboration and individual conversations following classroom visits. The students stated that the school pushes them toward college, and many of them claimed that they are also learning skills that could earn them competitive jobs by the time they graduate. All students are required to take four years of Math, Science, English and History and are also expected to take regents level classes at every grade level. The student government meets weekly and there are a vast amount of clubs, incentive and enrichment programs that includes Gamer Haven, Mass Multimedia, Girls Coding Club, Technovation, PSAL sports and many others. There is also a weekly 'School News and Health/Advisory/Government' paper that is produced by the teachers and students. The school pacing calendar, course sequence and curricular choices, unit mappings template and lesson plan templates all have clear academic targets that support student success in college and career readiness. The school's effort to communicate high expectations has resulted in a culture that is purposefully oriented to prepare students for the next level, whether it is a career choice or attending college.

- Instructional goals deepening and broadening the pedagogical consistency across classes and closing gaps for students has created clear learning targets and lesson objectives. (3.1)

  - Through the use of Career, Technology Education (CTE) the principal has focused on developing a high standard for effective actions which gives all students the equipment, mentors, academics and work internships so that they succeed. The school aligns its academic work, CTE goals, strategic decisions and resources around accelerating student learning. The staff through extensive professional development using data to understand each student's next learning steps has worked on crafting clear lesson objectives. The lesson template reflects moving students into the center of their learning experience as opposed to the teachers and instructional goals include increasing the rigor of lessons and aligning curriculum to the higher standards of the Common Core. Results from this collective work are evident in the progress students are making in receiving their required high school credits.

All freshmen will earn 10 or more credits including English language learners, students with special needs and students in the lowest third. There are AP courses for the highest third and students with special interests will be given access to courses. Apprenticeships and hands-on career development classes in technology assist students in achieving their fullest potential. Emails/informative letters and report cards informing of learning targets and goals, go home to parents. One parent stated that “my son is doing work in a field that he wants to study, what could be better?!” In an English Language Arts classroom, questions on the smart-board were student generated and used to guide the lesson. A science teacher using higher level questioning allowed students to self-correct and then determine the correct answer. Staff gathers and analyzes relevant data thereby giving them a clear understanding of individual student performance and progress. Goals are tracked for progress and adjusted to leverage changes that link to accelerated student learning and social-emotional growth. Students are in the center of their learning experiences. Constant monitoring and revising of teacher created work is evident in the progress students are making in earning high school regents and advanced placement credits. As a result, students and teachers more clearly grasp how students are performing in relation to learning targets and objectives.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure curricula and academic tasks coherently deepen teaching practices across all classrooms, reflect the school’s set of pedagogical beliefs to result in high levels of student thinking and engagement. (1.2)
    - The school’s set of teaching beliefs include using evidence and data to substantiate a claim and is informed by the Danielson Framework. Though most classes evidenced these practices, implementation was not consistent across all classrooms. For example, in a literacy class, one student supported a claim by starting with “as stated in the article...” However in another class students were engaged in using an anchor paper but text from the essay was never referred to while substantiating their claims, and no discussions took place to further the basis of the lesson. In math classes students were asked to multi-step problems and share explanations using reason and evidence. Using student work and data, the (CTE), Career and Technical Educational program emphasizes technology to assist in all students achieving success in college and career readiness. While this and other programs have acceptable practices in place for small group work and discussions, there is an over-reliance on the teacher in some classes to mediate the discussion and push students’ thinking. As a result too many learning tasks remain teacher-directed which then hampers students from demonstrating higher order thinking and engagement .Although a set a beliefs are present with practice shown in most classes, these beliefs are not yet implemented school wide resulting in missed opportunities to improve student performance.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: UA Gateway School for Technology	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score				X
Instructional Core				
To what extent does the school regularly…	**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				
To what extent does the school …	**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				
To what extent does the school …	**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**