



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Unity Center for Urban Technologies

High School M500

**111 East 33rd Street
Manhattan
NY 10016**

Principal: Fausto De la Rosa

**Date of review: May 6, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Marjory Matthieu-Kodjovi**

The School Context

Unity Center for Urban Technologies is a high school with 284 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 27 % Black, 58 % Hispanic, 6% White, 5% Asian students, and 4% other students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 65% of the students enrolled and girls account for 35%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 84.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Focus	Developing
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Proficient
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across the school, teachers consistently engage in analyzing data and student work in inquiry-based teams. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact

The teacher teams' analysis of student work and data has resulted in progress towards goals for groups and individual students, and shared leadership to ensure that teachers have input in making key decisions regarding school-wide practices.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly and engage in professional development, they collaborate with the consultant, and lead professional learning sessions on alternate weeks. They have developed structures including agendas, protocols, minutes, and supplemental materials, to support progress toward goals. Meetings focus in an integration of the school goals around citing evidence and evidence-based argument writing, as well as the improvement of curricula reflected in unit and lesson plans.
- During the teacher inquiry team meeting around annotation, teachers used student work, steps for implementing the strategy, data analysis, and a reflection protocol, to determine next steps for teaching practices and together make decisions as to what the focus of inquiry should be for the next cycle. Previously, they looked at student work and tasks that focused on the use of models to show students how to annotate and avoid common pitfalls such as 100% highlighted page or notes in the margins as annotators. Currently, teachers have decided reading strategies should be the focus for the next cycle of inquiry.
- Across departments and subjects, teachers stated they have high levels of autonomy to do what is best for their students. Most of the teachers serve on the Pupil Personnel Team and they have chosen a student who is at risk academically, behaviorally, or both. They agreed to track the students' progress and share this information with the inquiry team in an effort to meet students' needs where they are. Teachers are currently working with their Network's Youth Development liaison to strengthen their Response to Intervention (RTI).

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Teaching is beginning to reflect an articulated set of beliefs and alignment to curricula that engages students in high levels of thinking and student participation through student-to-student discourse, reflected in student work products.

Impact

Across classrooms visited, all students were not yet consistently engaged in tasks and/or classrooms discussions, resulting in uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans and classroom instruction, in many cases, reflected multiple entry points and attempts to engage students with disabilities and English language learners. However, attempts to engage higher-level learners were inconsistent. Additionally, the use of extensions, and opportunities to “differentiate up” were not consistently seen across classrooms, or within lesson plans.
- The majority of classrooms observed had classroom discussions that were teacher–student or student–teacher in pattern, thus providing limited opportunity for most students to demonstrate their thinking. In most classrooms, students were not observed engaging in peer-to-peer or full-class discussion, and students were inconsistently observed generating their own questions or responding directly to their peers. For example, in an English class observed, students were asked to observe a photo and respond to the question “What is the idea of the American Dream presented in this picture? In what way is it Utopian?” and to discuss their thinking with their partner and students were given worksheet. In this task, students were observed exchanging some ideas and listening to what their partner had to say. However, students were not engaged in peer-to-peer discussion regarding the written work products.
- Students’ work products inconsistently demonstrate high-level thinking or rigorous work habits. In an Integrated Algebra lesson, students worked productively in groups of three or four with State exam box-and whisker plot worksheet to find the mean/average of the following numbers: 36, 44, as well as to identify the middle number written in order from least to greatest, 45,4,6,28,13,67,9. The group assignment included solving a specific assigned problem using chart paper and completing the one box-and-whisker plot problem on a corresponding worksheet. At the conclusion of the lesson, the majority of students completed the assigned tasks and engaged in discussion around their process. In a social studies class, however, students worked independently to analyze historical accounts. Additionally, the teacher had to consistently prompt students to stay on task, read primary source for Woodrow Wilson document, and have students do sourcing questions.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Using student work and data, the school has developed and implemented curricula aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts.

Impact

Across classes teachers make intentional decisions so that a diversity of learners has access to the curricula and tasks, and that students are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams review unit and lesson plans to make adjustments to curricula. During the teacher team meeting, teachers stated that the “curricula is a living document” and we are constantly revising it to meet our students’ needs as integrating the shifts”. For example teachers shared that student engagement through academic discourse was an issue this year. Thus, in order to promote higher order thinking skills, teachers created a list of academic vocabulary that transfer to all content areas and which students are able to identify across classrooms. Accountable Discourse stem charts and academic vocabulary charts are displayed in each classroom so that students have a reference point for discussion. Therefore, one teacher shared that they are continuously working on refining their unit plan to review this concept further with their students.
- Lesson plans include unit essential questions, content and learning objectives, and assessment plans. Additionally, to move students’ thinking, teachers include and identify Depth of Knowledge, (DOK), Levels 2, 3, and 4 questions, and reference Costa’s Level of Questioning that includes three-story intellect high-level thinking skills. Both are used, throughout the delivery of instruction.
- A review of lesson plans and tasks indicate that teachers are aligning their units to the instructional shift of writing that cites evidence and makes evidence-based claims. Emphasis in English language arts standards are evident in the majority of lessons which focus on developing central ideas and citing text based evidence. Listed in several lesson plans were some questions and prompts to engage in task such as, “Can you provide an example, can you do it another way, how is this same?”, “Compile a soundtrack that conveys the concepts of the novel through use of evidence”, and “State your claim at the bottom of the poster.” During our student meeting, a student shared that as an English language learner, “he is more engaged in sharing and answering these types of questions now with more confidence.”

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use and create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. Progress monitoring informs student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Systems are in place to monitor progress through data analysis in order to provide feedback to students and guide adjustments in units and lessons to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Students are aware of how to use rubrics and know what their next steps are for growth. During the student meeting and in most classrooms, students were able to demonstrate actual growth based on feedback from teachers and use of rubrics. For example, one student who was preparing an argumentative essay for her ELA was able to demonstrate and discuss how she used her teacher's feedback to improve the quality of her paper by removing irrelevant information not pertinent to the topic. The student was able to clearly show growth in her next revisions.
- Across classrooms, teachers used questioning strategies to determine student understanding of the learning objective and took opportunities to adjust instruction. For example, in a Chemistry class, students were engaged in group activities while the teacher walked around and asked questions such as, "How would you draw a visual to demonstrate your knowledge of redox reaction?", "How are rare redox reactions classified?", and "What do you need to do to include a correctly balanced redox reaction and $\frac{1}{2}$ reaction?" After asking questions to all the groups, the teacher brought the whole group together and reviewed and discussed the rationale for the lesson. This level of assessment during instruction, which was evident in this class, was not prevalent in the vast majority of classes.
- Teachers monitor student progress via daily classroom data to guide instruction. Teachers use student work, snapshot assessments, exit tickets, shared assessments, in addition to using questioning as a check for understanding across classrooms visited. As per principal and teachers, this daily analysis as a formative assessment guides a teacher's next instructional steps.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations for all students and offer ongoing and detailed feedback and guidance/advisement supports that prepare students for the next level.

Impact

Structures are in place to provide ongoing feedback to students and families based upon a set of expectations resulting in a clear path to increased student achievement and college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Students described their school expectations is to try their best, to support one another's learning, and that their learning is relevant to post-secondary life. Student's stated that teachers sacrifice their time before school and after to offer academic support and tutoring. Additionally, the school holds advisory sessions on a weekly basis. During these sessions, students meet with their advisors in small groups settings. Topics relevant to their social and academic needs are discussed and students learn to express their thoughts with their peers, as stated by students and administrators. Furthermore, advisory provides a venue for discussions promoting college readiness and career exploration
- Administrators and teachers shared, and students concurred, that the school provides multiple opportunities for students to meet with teachers and make up work they have missed and/or want to improve during after school tutoring and Saturday Academy. Parents stated that they and their children check on their grades and assignments on Jupiter grades, where they are able to monitor their growth and progress in all of their classes on a daily basis. Parents and students are able to call, drop in, and e-mail teachers, and advocate for any discrepancies they might find. Teachers share classroom level data with students through Jupiter Grades and show students how to track their progress during and following each marking period.
- To increase college access and readiness and acceptance into the four year CUNY colleges, students are re-taking the math and English language arts Regents in order to raise their score and eligibility. After-school and Saturday tutoring is provided for all students. The school has also partnered with Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) where according to students and administration, students are taking general courses (English 101, psychology, and sociology.) For example a student shared, "these classes give us a chance to be exposed to college and to meet the expectations of college." Administrators shared that "We are continuing to expand student participation and exposing them to college instruction."