



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**Union Square Academy for Health Sciences
High School M533**

**40 Irving Place
Manhattan
NY 10003**

Principal: Bernardo Ascona

**Date of review: April 23, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Rafaela Landin**

The School Context

Union Square Academy for Health Sciences is a high school with 320 students from grade nine through grade eleven. The school population comprises 21% Black, 56% Hispanic, 8% White, 15% Asian, and 3% other. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 27% of the students enrolled and girls account for 73%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-15 was 91.0%.

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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Proficient
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	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leader and staff ensure that the curricula are aligned to the Common Core State Standards and the content standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts across grades and subject areas. Academic tasks offer all students including English language learners and students with disabilities access to rigorous and engaging learning experiences.

Impact

As a result, the school curricula decisions ensure coherence across grades and rigorous tasks support high levels of student thinking and promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses a uniform template for unit plans in all content areas that include the Common Core State Standards, content standards, domain specific vocabulary, instructional strategies; project based learning, use of technology, resources for the unit and professional resources for the teachers, learning targets, lesson –by –lesson instructional plans and assessments aligned to the standards, and questions developed using Depth of Knowledge Framework. For example, a review of a unit of study in science, grade nine shows teaching strategies such as; think-pair-share, oral presentation and peer assessments expected to be used in the unit. Additionally, the unit evidenced the reading standards for literacy and the technical subjects addressed in the unit plan emphasized college and career readiness for all students.
- The school has developed curriculum maps for all content areas in all grades and has made strategic decisions in their revision and adjustment process to emphasize coherence and higher order skills across grades and subject areas. The leadership shared curriculum maps for grades nine through eleven demonstrating the adaptations and revision process for alignment and coherence for writing and English literature. Teachers collaborate on a weekly basis to analyze students’ data and make informed decisions on revisions of curriculum maps. Teachers and the leadership ensure that driving questions are written across the grades in all subjects and lesson plan templates are uniform and used by all when planning. After an analysis of the writing data, teachers decided to begin the writing units with graphic organizers across the grades and to align and adjust the rubrics to be more specific to the writing tasks.
- Students’ work in classrooms visited and tasks reviewed during students’ interviews across all content areas evidenced alignment to the Common Core State Standards and Content Standards. In addition, tasks evidenced rigorous habits and higher order skills and instructional strategies are made to ensure access to the curricula. For example, a ninth grade English task asked students to write a medical case study after reading “The Bluest Eye”, using textual evidence and medical terminology learned in a previous lesson. A tenth grade task engaged students in analyzing some of the errors that may occur when processing a new prescription and evaluating prescriptions and patient profile to determine if the prescription should be filled. The tasks evidenced higher order thinking skills and promote college and career readiness.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Teachers' pedagogy consistently provides scaffolds to ensure students experience rigorous instruction and engage in high-level thinking and discussions. Strategies and extensions to produce meaningful work products, however, are not always strategically planned.

Impact

As a result, opportunities for extended learning and demonstration of high level student thinking, participation and ownership are inconsistently reflected across the majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- In some of the classrooms visited, teachers provided students with multiple entry points into the lesson to ensure that all students had access to the curricula. For example, in algebra II class students were observed working on finding out the number of triangles from all angular perspectives. Additionally, students had to find out the angle and the side measurements of each triangle. Students were provided with technology, prompts, graphic organizers and individualized support provided by three adults, partner and group work to engage all learners with the content.
- In a few classrooms, students had opportunities to engage in rigorous tasks on their own, in pairs or in groups to build high critical thinking, participation and high level work products. In a United States History class, students were observed citing evidence from text, making connections, questioning and analyzing text by participating in a Socratic Circle Seminar. Other students from the out of circle clarified questions and gave their opinion based on the text that they had read in previous class. The activity was organized and provided cognitive challenge for the students to derive the learning from the task, the discussion and the reflection.
- In an ICT English class, students engaged in Turn and Talk, and were given wait time to respond to questions and discussions centered on the book, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," by William Shakespeare. Students were observed discussing the similarities and differences of tragic themes encountered during the class reading of "Romeo and Juliet." Accommodations for this lesson included modeling, partner work, prompts, and the strategic use of native language instruction.
- A review of classwork, and other tasks completed by students, indicated that most students' work illustrates high levels of student thinking, participation and analytical reasoning. Tasks in all content areas also evidenced the school's efforts in providing multiple entry points to accommodate the individual learning needs of all students. The school uses different types of representation, engagement and expressions in the development of learning tasks that promote high level student thinking. In a ninth grade class, students worked in groups of six to teach the class about a specific portion of the Renaissance. Topics for the project included: Art and Architecture, Health, Fashion and Beauty, Industry, Science and Technology, Literature and Entertainment.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

The school has developed common assessments and rubrics aligned to the curricula to determine student progress towards goals across grades and content areas and teachers also create assessments and grading policies.

Impact

Assessment practices provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding academic achievement and adjustments needed to curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- As stated by the leadership and teacher teams, across classrooms, teachers use uniform mid-term and final assessments for each trimester. Each content area includes curriculum maps and assessments aligned to each unit of study. The assessments are given in the form of projects with artifacts. These exams are administered three times per year and students are responsible for completing two projects per trimester. Additionally, teachers use the results of the data to revise and add instructional strategies to ascertain academic achievement. Teachers and guidance personnel take the information gathered through the analysis of the data and create success plans for each student. The plan for success includes: reasons why the student failed the marking period, specific skills and content on curriculum maps where student is struggling, personnel at the school level and at the home contacted to inform, and strategies that will be used at the school level to support the students to achieve academic success.
- The school uses common assessments and rubrics aligned to the Common Core State Standards to determine progress towards curricula goals and provide feedback to students regarding their academic achievement. A review of portfolios during classroom visitation and conversations with students showed evidence of the use of rubrics and feedback given to students to advance their learning. Furthermore, students were able to articulate the purpose of the rubrics and checklists and they were able to explain the written reflections on work that they wrote based on the feedback given by teachers. For example, eleventh grade students spoke about how the feedback given by teachers has improved their work in pre-calculus and English class. Students also indicated that sometimes they work with a partner to help them with their work. Students and teachers shared that the school uses a uniform collaboration rubric for students to do peer editing and give each other feedback.
- Teachers meet in teams on a weekly basis during inquiry and in grade common planning time to make adjustments and revisions to the curriculum maps, units of study and lessons based on the analysis of student work, data results and expectations of the curricula. Assessments data is used to target students for small group instruction, intervention, conferring and individualized support. For example, during the teacher interview and the meeting with the leadership, it was reported that after the administration of the Regents mock exam, the school used the analysis of the data to identify students and provide them with additional tutoring hours via a Saturday academy and after school.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff consistently embed high expectations in all aspects of school culture, focusing on the Danielson Framework for Teaching and college and career readiness, and successfully partner with families for mutual understanding of those expectations.

Impact

Systems and structures that support a culture of high expectations, responsibilities, and professional collaboration for staff, students and families effectively communicate mutual accountabilities amongst all stakeholders for achieving the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers shared that the leadership conducts summer professional development and daily one to one meetings with the staff to reflect on the vision and goals of the school. At these meetings, the Danielson Framework for Teaching is discussed and class/school data is reviewed. All feedback given to the staff is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Reviews of observations reveal that teachers receive feedback on questioning, engagement and assessment of student learning. Teachers are given opportunities for inter-visitation to strengthen their practice. Additionally, the principal shares with all staff a common language protocol to build school culture which indicates all expectations for teaching and learning in the school.
- Curriculum maps in all content areas, a cohesive unit plan template, rubrics and checklists for all performance tasks and project based learning define for all teachers the expectations of teaching and learning at the school. Evaluation of unit plans and conversations with teachers revealed that teachers across grades and content areas use the Depth of Knowledge Framework to develop questions; focusing on level 3 and level 4 questions. A review of the lesson plan template and unit clearly delineate expectations for instruction for all staff. For example, a review of a science unit showed the essential and driving questions for the unit, specific strategies, and differentiation to accommodate the different learning needs of the students, assessments and evidence of learning, rubrics and instructional support.
- Conversations with teachers, students, parents and the leadership showed that students begin their four year college and career plan when they enter the school in ninth grade. Students are provided with opportunities to write resume and cover letters, and attend weekend re-treats. For example, students attend the St. John's University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences of New York University College of Dentistry and this experience has provided for students awareness of requirements needed to attend college. In addition to the aforementioned, the program supports students with college and career readiness and understanding of how to set long term and short term educational goals.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry and professional collaborations to develop curriculum, analyze student work and plan instruction. Teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning.

Impact

As a result, the work of teacher teams has led to the school instructional coherence and increase in teacher collaboration and sharing of best teaching practices. Teachers’ participation in key decision making centered on curricula and instruction facilitates student engagement and students’ success.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams promote the implementation of Common Core State Standards and the instructional shift. Teacher teams engaged in the vertical alignment of curriculum and collaborate to unpack the Common Core Learning Standards and use this knowledge to develop units of study and performance tasks. During a teacher team special education meeting, teachers had an agenda and shared that the school uses an online Google calendar, Google drive which include grade and content team folders, agendas and minutes of all team work developed during teacher team.
- To build capacity and support teacher teams in data driven inquiry work, the school provides opportunities for teachers to engage in inter-visitations and receive feedback from their peers and from the administrative team. Teachers conduct classroom visits of each other’s classrooms and provide feedback on the progress within the eight components of the Danielson Framework. This framework is used by teachers and the administrators to build a common language of best teaching practices for implementing Common Core aligned instruction to ensure student progress in all content areas and to strengthen teacher pedagogy. Additionally, the school affords teachers opportunities to receive professional development facilitated by teacher’s college, network specialists, coaches and administrators. For example, teacher leaders were trained in the fall by teacher’s college on how to develop Common Core units of study.
- Within grade and content teams, teachers engage in structured, inquiry based professional collaborations aligned to the schools’ goals. The school provides opportunities for all teachers to have a leadership role within teacher teams by having a rotating leadership model to support analysis of students’ data, student work analysis to determine growth and areas of focus, adjustments and revisions to the school curricula. Additionally, the administrative team meets with teacher leaders on an ongoing basis to align teamwork to the goals of the school. Minutes, agendas and documents in Google drive supports this analysis.