



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**University Heights High School**

**High School X495**

**701 St. Ann's Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10455**

**Principal: Hazel Joseph-Roseboro**

**Date of review: March 19, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Elaine Lindsey**

## The School Context

University Heights High School is a high school with 486 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 30% Black, 65% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 8% special education students. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

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

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders have established an accountable culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff and students that are connected to a path toward college and career readiness. Teachers provide students with clear, focused and effective feedback and guidance/advisement supports to ensure they are prepared for the next level.

### Impact

High expectations are effectively communicated and successful partnerships with families support student progress toward those expectations. The ongoing feedback and guidance/advisement supports create a strong sense of ownership for student learning that will prepare them for college and careers.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty share clearly defined expectations with students and parents at the beginning of the school year. The school provides students and parents with a copy of the school's Road Map for Success in College and Career upon entering the school. Maps start with a visual of the school's summer bridge program that clearly outlines yearly steps for academic success. All students are expected to take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), earn a minimum score of 75 on the English language arts Regents examination and participate in college preparation and career exploration.
- All students are required to take Advanced Placement (AP) and college courses. The school's eleven on-site college courses taught by City University of New York (CUNY) professors and four-year advisory program focusing on college preparedness support the school's expectations that all students access curricula that prepare them for college and careers. Additionally, all grade 9 students take a college readiness course taught by CUNY professors. Structured systems for course registration simulate the college experience. Students have voice and choice in selecting and dropping elective courses each semester through the school's online registration course add and drop system.
- Teacher teams establish a common language that communicates high expectations to all students through the school's unified grading policy, Performance Based Assessment Tests (PBATS) and consortium rubrics to provide clear, focused and effective feedback for all students. The online grading and feedback through the school's Digital Portfolio system provides home access and immediate teacher feedback on school projects and tasks allowing students to take ownership of their educational experience.
- School leaders along with the leadership team created the school's first Parent University to partner with families to support student progress toward college and careers. Through Parent University, parents have opportunities to attend workshops on topics of interest, take continuing education college courses in addition to business and English as a second language courses. Exposure to college provides families with personal experience to support their student to do well in college. A partnership with Bronx Community College creates access around college and careers for parents to help them do well.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

The Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts inform an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Teachers effectively implement student-centered strategies that promote high levels of discussion and student engagement in rigorous tasks/activities.

### Impact

Across classrooms, the implementation of varied instructional strategies provides multiple entry points into the curriculum for all learners, enabling them to be engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and higher order thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- Observed classroom practice reflects the school's belief that students learn best when the whole child engages in critical thinking, experiential learning and connections to real world applications. Across classrooms, teachers use structures and routines to ensure that students engage in tasks that incorporate these beliefs. Teachers use a common template and Performance Based Assessment Test (PBAT) to organize lessons to include essential questions, guided and independent practice, opportunities for students to work together and engage in inquiry to increase instructional coherence.
- During an English class, students watched the film "A Simple Plan" to prepare for reading Macbeth. Throughout the lesson, students became familiar with varied themes in the text through the film and by working collaboratively in groups to understand points of view by engaging with the theme through improvisation. A brainstorming activity culminated in a short skit prepared from a scenario provided by the teacher. In a biology class, students worked independently designing their own experiment, investigating an authentic question of their choosing, and analyzing the data using mathematical and research-based analysis.
- In classrooms visited, student discussions reflected high levels of thinking and participation. In a United States history class, students worked cooperatively in groups preparing debates to support their position for or against congress joining the League of Nations. Students worked together to prepare their arguments within their respective groups to present to the class. However, during presentations, most probing questions came from the teacher. Opportunities to respond to peers' presentations were limited. In an English class, after reading one of two assigned articles about cell phones in classrooms, students worked in heterogeneous groups to create an argumentative defense to support their positions. Students were to engage in discussion around the article prior to group work; however, the teacher did not provide ample time for strong discussion before the grouping.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Curricula across all grades and subjects are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and reflect the integration of instructional shifts. Academic tasks are planned and refined based on the analysis of student work and data.

### Impact

The school's curricular decisions provide coherence across disciplines and grades levels, which results in access for all learners to engage in rigorous tasks that push thinking and promote college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers participate in curriculum teams to develop curricula. As a part of the New York performance consortium, the school's curriculum is specialized to include the state standards. Performance based assessments are embedded into the curriculum and inform all revisions and modifications. Teachers meet for backward planning, identifying skills that students need for college and career. The history curriculum includes a research paper with infused project based learning. In grade 9, students engage in Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) class units on neuroscience and motion, culminating in an egg drop experiment that teaches students how fast their brains respond to stimuli.
- Curricula and academic tasks are refined from the beginning of the school year using the Understanding by Design (UBD) template to analyze data from the SAT, CUNY college entrance exam and PBATs. Math teachers reviewed the data and adjusted the math curriculum to include pacing and more math projects that align with SAT questions. Additionally, English curriculum was refined to include more scaffolds to pick apart questions and facilitate comprehension of more complex text by using strategies to break down vocabulary to improve understanding. As a result, they restored Shakespeare and Othello to the curriculum in addition to more non-fiction text and opportunities to read current articles.
- The school's consortium graduation portfolio requirements help define rigor and ensure that tasks are rigorous and Common Core aligned. To start the process of preparing students for college and careers, teachers look at middle school English scores. This data revealed a writing deficit amongst grade 9 students around argument and organization, informing the school's decision around revisions for freshmen students that include more time on tasks, supports for organization and opportunities to engage in argumentative writing.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Common, formative and summative assessments are aligned to curricula and utilized to provide actionable feedback to students and teachers on student achievement and to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels.

### **Impact**

The school-wide systems that are in place to monitor progress through data analysis, student self-assessment, and classroom instruction, ensure that curriculum/instruction is not only aligned to established standards but also adjusted as needed to meet students' learning needs.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- All students participate in online digital portfolio assessments. Through digital portfolios, students self-assess and teachers identify mastery level for immediate feedback. The school tracks student progress to determine the effectiveness of instructional support. Additionally, math teachers utilize the school's in-house Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to monitor student mastery in class. During in class assignments, teachers monitor students during tasks and they receive highlights in red, green or yellow to identify their level of understanding. Teachers use this tool to provide immediate feedback and on the spot support and adjustments.
- The school's use of New York Performance Standards Consortium rubrics across disciplines and common performance based assessments provide a shared understanding of student mastery and achievement that leads to adjustments in curriculum. Teachers make curriculum adjustments after they participate in whole school data analysis to determine student progress. Further refinement included tasks and assessments that simulate the Common Core English language arts Regents exam.
- The school uses a curricula aligned common grading policy across disciplines. Each discipline has a mastery grade break down with assigned weight to summative and formative assessments that include projects, presentations, exams, reports, class work, homework and participation. The development of departmental grading policies has led to a shared understanding of mastery that provides actionable feedback regarding student achievement.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers engage in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote achievement of school goals and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams provide distributive leadership opportunities that promote their participation in making key decisions that affect student learning.

**Impact**

The teacher teamwork promotes shared leadership practices that are strengthening teachers' instructional capacity and improving student learning outcomes.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams meet weekly for vertical and horizontal alignment of curriculum. Curricular teams identify and organize Common Core standards. Teacher teams develop curricular units collaboratively to ensure that students engage in rigorous tasks. The teams use student work products and data to refine academic tasks and ensure that all students demonstrate learning. During a team meeting, teachers discussed their process for engaging in inquiry work. Teachers stated that they use student work products and data to refine academic tasks and to ensure that all students demonstrate learning.
- Teachers are empowered and have a voice in making improvements to the school's structures. Every teacher in the school serves on multiple teacher teams and works collaboratively with their peers and administration to target, evaluate, assess and refine the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Teachers promote implementation of the Common Core Standards through their weekly curriculum and team meetings and by participating in a professional learning environment that allows them to share best practices. Teacher teams participate in the design of professional development that provides teachers with support, voice and choice in developing their practices. Teachers have the opportunity to participate in teacher labs multiple times each year, where they select areas for growth and development. Additionally, teacher teams use a variety of data sources, including scholarship reports, interim assessments, school quality snap shots, performance based assessments, ELA data, college and career benchmarks and student work products to improve instruction and to determine students' needs.
- Teacher teams make key decisions to affect student learning across the school. There is evidence of key decisions that affect student learning through the provision of additional supports for students both during and after school and on Saturdays. During a teacher team meeting, teachers stated that they were instrumental in creating the concept of Saturday Academy to replicate what they are doing for Senior Academy. Teachers saw that there was not enough time for support during the regular school day to address all students' needs. During classroom visits, teachers directed struggling students to one of these supports. Students also mentioned the availability of afterhours support. Additionally, teachers were instrumental in creating Saturday PBAT and technology class to support struggling students across grades and disciplines.