



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

New Utrecht High School

High School K445

**1601 80 Street
Brooklyn
NY 11214**

Principal: Maureen Goldfarb

**Date of review: April 12, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier**

The School Context

New Utrecht High School is a high school with 3,574 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 40% Asian, 4% Black, 29% Hispanic, and 27% White students. The student body includes 19% English Language Learners and 16% students with disabilities. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 88.3%.

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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , 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	Celebration	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	Additional Findings	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. The school provides ongoing feedback to families connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Staff are supported by a system of accountability. Ongoing feedback helps families understand student progress toward goals for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations and provide feedback utilizing Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* as the standard for professionalism and quality instruction. Each rated item on observation reports includes specific language from the rubric, evidence from the classroom observation that supports the rating along with actionable next steps. These are then addressed in subsequent classroom observations. For example, a teacher's observation report contained feedback for engaging students in learning that read, "To be effective in engaging students and maintain effective rigor, you must prepare to ask open ended questions which promote critical thinking. Please refer to Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* when planning and preparing effective questions and activities." A subsequent observation report for the same teacher conducted within the following two months showed an increase in rating in engaging students from a one to a three.
- Students and their families speak highly of the school and the communication received concerning academic support. PupilPath is actively utilized in keeping families abreast of how students are doing academically. One parent said, "I was able to see that my son worked on two college essays by checking PupilPath." Additionally, one student said, "On PupilPath, you can check your grades to see how you're doing, check the homework, and sometimes you can send your work or talk to teachers about it. They send notifications from it." Another student said, "PupilPath is helping me get ready for college because I can always improve my grades. I see my grades and then talk with my teacher about how I can do better. I end up getting higher grades." Parents also praised teachers for their communication via email and phone calls. Support for families results from the principal and parent coordinators' open door policy, as well as the school website which includes calendars, the student newspaper as well as college office information.
- One parent said, to which all agreed, that "The school wants all kids to go to college. They're always inviting us to college information nights." Some examples of college information sessions already held and scheduled for later this year are "Which SUNY Are You?" "New Utrecht H.S. College Fair," "College Night," "15th Annual HBCU Bus Tour," "2016 Spring SUNY College Fair," "NACAC National College Fair," and "Black College Expo." A student said, "I've taken College Now classes. One class was all about college readiness." Another student added, "In College Writing, we started reading essays and books, and wrote essays like we'll do in college. They treat us like college kids." The four year graduation rate has increased from 70% at the close of 2013-2014 school year to 74% at the close of the 2014-2015 school year. Additionally, while 54% of graduates from 2013-2014 were enrolled in college within six months of graduation, 56% of graduates from the 2014-2015 school year were enrolled in college within six months of graduation.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the school's instructional focus that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Additionally, teaching practices inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Teaching practices across classrooms do not yet fully reflect the school's beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching practices result in uneven student engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstration of higher-order thinking skills by all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have identified questioning and engagements as the Danielson Framework for Teaching domains comprising their school's instructional focus. In a grade 9 English Language Arts (ELA) class, one student moderated a student-to-student discussion of the class text using a Discussion Guidelines worksheet with facilitator and student participants role responsibilities clearly expressed. In another grade 9 ELA class, students were engaged in a Socratic Seminar discussion activity centered on the central question "Why do you think the main character believed that the wilderness would save him?" However, across grades and courses this practice is inconsistent with teacher centered instruction in some classes. In a geometry class, questions and answers to teacher-asked questions were all directed back to the teacher. In a math class, after one student omitted information from an answer written on the board, the teacher asked if any one student could identify the error. Students did not have the opportunity to turn to a partner and discuss the error.
- In a grade 10 Global Studies class, students conducted a gallery walk of documents related to China's One Child Policy while answering high-level questions such as "Do you think environmental concerns like air pollution, water pollution and overcrowding justify a One Child Policy? Explain," and "If you were a small factory owner in Beijing, would you support the Once Child Policy? Why?" However, in a mixed grade geometry class, students were asked low-level questions such as "What is a hemisphere?" "What is the formula?" Also, in an advanced placement (AP) World History class, while student groups delivered presentations on different genocides that have occurred throughout history, there was no direction to the students comprising the audience to engage in any form of note-taking, question writing or answering process.
- In a grade 9 Algebra class, students worked in pairs to brainstorm real world examples of parabolas and parabolic shapes. These students were asked to answer the follow-up question "How can we relate the vertex and roots to contextual problems?" However, during a grade 11 U.S. History class, students were split into two groups to devise arguments for which of the US presidents to which they were assigned was better. Within these groups, conversation was dominated by up to three and four students. Whilst a group of students dominated the discussion with their thinking, the majority of learners did not have the opportunity to demonstrate their thinking. In a grade 10 ELA Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students were paired according to their students' personal preference, without consideration of instructional adjustments and modifications mandated by individual student Individual Educational Plans.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and teachers ensure curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Higher order skills are consistently emphasized in curricula and tasks across grades and subject areas for all students.

Impact

Purposeful decisions have resulted in curricular coherence, building college and career readiness for all students. Additionally, rigorous habits and higher-order skills are consistently emphasized in curricula across grades for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular documents demonstrated evidence of alignment to the Common Core and the integration of the instructional shifts through an emphasis on questioning and discussion across the curricula. This is accomplished through the inclusion of non-fiction readings, discussion question seminar guidelines, and pre and post reading activities into the curricula. A grade 9 ELA lesson includes prompts for students with thought questions such as, “Using textual evidence and your own inferences, how did the use of this land impact the community?” The Algebra II/Trigonometry unit plan includes writing prompts such as, “If logarithms were useful in a time without calculators, why then do we still need to study logarithms?”, “Explain how the graph of an exponential function can be used to solve specific exponential equations,” and “Describe a real-life circumstance that illustrates the concept of direct variation. Amend your idea to illustrate the concept of inverse variation.”
- Curricular documents provided evidence of emphasis on rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all students, including for ELLs and students with disabilities. A grade 10 Global lesson plan expected students to analyze China’s One Child Policy. The lesson included turn and talk discussion prompts such as, “What is overpopulation?” and “What is propaganda?” In order to engage ELLs, lesson resources included a translated version of the question sheet to be used by students during the gallery walk activity. Also, ELL students were purposefully partnered with non-ELL students who also spoke the native language of the ELL student. A grade 11 ELA lesson plan includes a table listing each student with disabilities by name along with their respective testing accommodations, learning styles and management needs.
- A review of written lesson plans across all content areas revealed that in-class learning targets consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills such as analysis of complex characters and the use of evidence to defend arguments, analyzing information from multiple sources, and applying concepts in real world situations. In a grade 11 Earth Science class, students were prompted to write a response to “Among these factors, what is the major factor affecting climate. Why did you choose this factor?” In a grade 9 Living Environment class, students were prompted to write a response to “How do the relative amounts of each base in trout heart cells compare with the relative amounts of each base in yeast?”

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use and create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies aligned with the school's curricula. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Actionable feedback is provided for students and teachers regarding student achievement. Using assessment data, teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students' needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, samples of student work products showed teacher written actionable feedback. Some examples of that feedback were: "Accurate diagrams for the definitions. Next time consider a more precise diagram to represent a segment in the real world," "Excellent job with structure. Next time, however, be sure you choose evidence that clearly shows characterization," and "You did an excellent job. Next time, choose two pieces of evidence to illustrate your chosen element." One student said, "I get feedback on everything I write. I use it to rewrite my essays for a higher grade." Another student added, "I do the same, also with rubrics."
- Teachers continually check for understanding throughout daily lessons through check-ins and the issuance of exit-tickets. In a Living Environment class the teacher was able to identify a question that two student groups had in common as a result of a check for understanding. The teacher then drew the attention of all students in class to this question for their consideration. The correct answer was ultimately provided by a student from the third student group. In a grade 9 Algebra class, the teacher determined that one group required re-teaching and adjusted the lesson so that this instruction could be delivered at that moment. In an Italian class, the teacher circulated throughout the room to check-in with students who had struggled during the whole class discussion of types of foods in Italian.
- The Gates MacGinitie Reading Test is administered at the beginning and of the year. ELA teachers use this data to group students heterogeneously to ensure that each group has one high performing student. Additionally, ELL students are grouped with non-ELL students fluent in the ELL students' native language. In a grade 9 Algebra class, the teacher maintains a daily record of student achievement on the same graphic organizer that details the seating chart that indicates the groups to which students have been assigned. The teacher reassigns students to different groups based on the data collected on these graphic organizers.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations. Teacher teams are beginning the work of analyzing assessment data and student work for students they share or are focused on.

Impact

Teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations in which common planning and review of best practices takes place. However, teacher team work does not result in progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- During the geometry teacher team meeting, data from a quiz administered the day before was analyzed. Teachers discussed common issues with students incorrectly applying formulas and steps to further develop student understanding of when to apply certain formulas. A review of teacher team learning logs revealed this team discussed such topics as an appropriate date for spring midterm, how to develop short- and immediate-term common pacing and lesson content, and confirmed the calendar of lessons for the coming week. However, this team primarily meets to plan lessons and units without using an inquiry based approach to analyze student work.
- Review of social studies, art, and music teacher team logs revealed the absence of a targeted group of students for which specific data or student work are being analyzed. Logs noted that these teams discussed pacing and unit-planning for upcoming weeks,, assessments for the first days of the second semester and discussed the topics, themes, and content to create common assignments, projects, and exams for the upcoming units. There was no evidence that student work or assessment data had been analyzed by this teacher team. The Science and Technology Binder indicated teachers completed learning logs earlier this year for up to six students. Each Learning Log offered a narrative statement outlining the learner’s ELL and/or SPED status and other aspects of that students’ learning profile, such as grade, participation, language and social issues. The Learning Logs also identified strategies that worked for the individual learner and ideas for modifications and assistance. However, there was no evidence that this team identified a target group of students in the sample or analyzed student work.