Quality Review Report
2018-2019

University Neighborhood High School
High School 01M448
200 Monroe Street
Manhattan
NY 10002

Principal: Matthew Willie

Dates of Review:
May 22, 2019 - May 23, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Kevin Bradley
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Celebration to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Focus to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as Additional Finding. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

University Neighborhood High School serves students in grade 9 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Quality Ratings continued

#### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Celebration</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

The school’s approach to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support includes both academic and social-emotional learning.

Impact

There is a safe environment and inclusive culture that support progress toward the school's goals and positively impacts student behaviors. School leaders meaningfully involve student voice in decision-making to initiate, guide, and lead school improvement efforts and structures are in place to know each student well and personalize supports.

Supporting Evidence

- Students reported that they feel safe. Students have a meaningful voice in school improvement plans, particularly around inclusiveness. For example, the equity team consists of five teachers, an assistant principal, the parent coordinator, two students, and the principal. The equity team meets to plan professional development (PD) workshops. At these workshops, topics such as LGBTQ-inclusive classroom practices, implicit bias, institutional bias, becoming an ally for underrepresented students, and creating culturally responsive classrooms are discussed. The equity team includes student voices in these workshops by creating activities around anonymous students’ quotes that reflect their thoughts on the school climate. The team has also partnered with New York University (NYU) who has run workshops for students in understanding unattended bias and generated feedback from students about school culture. The NYU facilitators shared their findings with the staff, facilitating the use of feedback from students to plan next steps in achieving equity.

- Inclusiveness is accomplished through culturally responsive teaching, involving the four R’s of culturally responsive teaching: relevance, rigor, relationships, and realness. The impact of this practice has resulted in more Black and Latino students in honors and advance classes. Student voice is evident through a “Did You Know, Did You Know?” morning announcements segment that highlights important facts about different cultures. Students are also involved in student government and have important input in inclusive events throughout the year including transgender awareness week, pride week, Black history month, women’s history month, Hispanic heritage month, Lunar New Year, Eid, and Cinco de Mayo celebrations. As a result, an inclusive culture meaningfully involves student voice.

- A variety of personalized structures are in place, including specific supports defined by grade levels. The ninth-grade assimilation stage involves participating in weekly LEEP (Learn, Engage, Empower, Prepare) workshops during the fall semester for transition from middle to high school through guidance, themed activities, workshops, and action planning with topics such as change management; recognizing self-worth, high school resources, diversity in school and the world; and communication skills. During the tenth-grade exploration stage, students write an effective email, create a presentation, and create resumes and cover letters as well as practice interview skills in business classes. During the eleventh-grade interaction stage, students participate in public speaking workshops, including creating a 30-second pitch for college interviews. The twelfth-grade preparation stage involves topics such as growth mindset versus fixed mindset, critical thinking, stress management, time management, and goal setting. As a result, these structures impact students’ personal and academic behaviors as students reported that these workshops help them to be prepared for other classes.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices reflect an articulated set of beliefs that all students can learn best through an independent learner model. Student discussion is evident across most classrooms.

Impact

Classroom practices such as independent and student-led activities and discussions are not yet coherent across all classrooms. While students reflect high levels of thinking and participation, in some cases lack of student-led discussion limits student engagement in their learning process.

Supporting Evidence

- During a government and economics lesson, students rotated through self-paced stations to learn about credit cards and fees. The students had graphic organizers and language translation supports were in place. The teacher supplied answer keys for students to reference once done. An activity sheet was passed out that each student was to complete after brief explanation from the teacher. During a Living Environment beaks of finch’s lab, students worked in groups with access points, translated resources, and Chinese language supports. The teacher reviewed the tools to be used in lab and students filled out lab paper, mostly working independently. During an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) Algebra I lesson, students were in six groups, using graphing calculators, and working on different Regents questions at different stations. Students had colored access points and language access points to support independent work at the stations. All students rotated to all stations, though some students were ready to move on to the next station and others needed more support. While across classrooms, the articulated beliefs of independent work were evident, in other classrooms activities lacked additional supports for independent time.

- During an English lesson about The Odyssey, students were in groups as the teacher asked students about the characteristics of a good leader while a student wrote responses on the whiteboard. In six different groups, students had opportunities to turn and talk with peers, and to answer teacher questions in a whole-class format. Student discussions reflected high levels of student thinking. During an English 10 lesson, students practiced close reading skills while reading Macbeth. Groups finished their whiteboard responses and the teacher referred students to the whiteboards during her discussion with students. However, fewer than half of the students were called on by teacher to answer questions and while some students had multiple opportunities to answer teacher questions, others did not have opportunities to engage in discussion with teacher or peers. Across classrooms students participated in discussions, though student to student discussion was not evident across the vast majority of classrooms, leading to missed opportunities to build student ownership.

- Across classrooms, students are engaged in discussions and peer assessments. During an English 11 lesson about crafting a body paragraph and analysis of text, students were paired within groups to work together on an intro paragraph peer check. Students were involved in discussions with each other and had rubrics to reference as they read their partner’s paragraph and filled out feedback sheets. During a dance class, a student-led discussion about movie projects gave focused peer feedback. However, during an Algebra II/Trig lesson on calculating standard deviation, students worked on a formative assessment and although seated in groups, most students worked individually on the assignment and were quiet during this time. During an Earth Science ICT class, students were prompted at times to discuss with a partner, but not all partners participated in a discussion limiting demonstration of their ownership. While across classrooms, there were high levels of student participation, in some classrooms, student to student discussions were not evident, thus preventing students from exhibiting ownership.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

Curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in academic tasks that are embedded across grades and subjects.

Impact

Curricular alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts results in coherence across grades and subject areas, promoting college and career readiness for all learners.

Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized so all learners must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans consistently challenge students to utilize rigorous habits. Learning objective statements in lesson plans include, from an English 11 unit plan, "Students will be able to write a body paragraph that demonstrates an understanding of formal writing structure and an ability to insightfully analyze a literary text" and from a Living Environment lesson plan, “Students will be able to learn how structural differences may affect the survival rate of members within a species.” Lesson plans consistently detailed high-level questions. Examples of higher-order questions found in curricular documents include in a government and economics lesson plan, “How do our financial decisions impact the rest of our lives?”, in an eleventh-grade English lesson plan, “How can I craft a body paragraph that provides a clear and well developed analysis of a text?”, and in an Algebra II/Trigonometry lesson plan, “How do population parameters allow us to analyze a given set accurately?” Coherence across grades and subjects appears in curriculum maps that outline essential questions, student learning objectives, and content skills that are based on curriculum as well as interdisciplinary connections across subject areas.

- Lesson plans, unit plans and curriculum maps reflect integration of the instructional shifts embedded in Common Core Learning Standards across content areas. For example, lesson plans in English emphasize the value of text-based evidence. An English lesson plan on *The Odyssey* asks students to cite textual evidence that explains two types of characterization. Strategic integration of the instructional shift of informational text is reinforced across content areas as the school emphasizes informational writing through rubrics. The mathematics instructional shift of fluency is included in curricular documents. For example, an Algebra lesson plan guides students through calculating equations as they prepped for Regents exams. Curriculum maps include interdisciplinary connections, such as synthesizing ideas verbally and in writing, transitioning from guided notes to independent notes, applying problem solving skills independently, and working constructively in small groups, resulting in coherence across grades and subject areas while promoting college and career readiness.

- A review of curricular documents demonstrates academic tasks that emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all students. ICT lesson plans across the school outline specific steps of each classroom teacher action listed side-by-side with the accompanying student actions to ensure that tasks are embedded in a coherent way for all students. Lesson plans include modifications for students with Individualized Educational Programs (IEP), including access point worksheets and supports designed for specific students noted by name in the lesson plan to allow all students to demonstrate their thinking. Lesson plans involving English Language Learners (ELLs) include translation of materials into native language supports, such as the Chinese language translated resources in a science class, ensuring that ELL students are able to demonstrate their thinking according to the same high-level standards expected of all students.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment  
Rating: Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. School leaders and teachers use benchmark assessments to create a clear picture of student progress toward goals.

Impact

High quality assessment practices provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers use student assessment data to adjust curricula and instruction and as a result, students demonstrate increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, samples of student work products showed teacher-written actionable and meaningful feedback directing students to the steps they should take to strengthen their work. Some examples of that feedback were, from a twelfth-grade essay, “Second paragraph could use better transitions between evidence;” from a math assignment about systems of equations, “In the future think about what mistake your friend may make (think back to mistakes you may have made) and then address those in your writing as well;” and from a math interest project, “I would have liked to see you support your argument more with your mathematical calculations.” Students spoke about the meaningful actionable feedback they received from their teachers stating, “We receive feedback all the time. There’s never a time we don’t receive feedback. There’s always feedback, either immediately or as soon as we get the assignment back. We can use their feedback to improve our work to get a better grade and it helps us to get better grades on other assignments later on. Jupiter Grades [the online grading system] gives us feedback every week and some teachers update it immediately.”

- The school has a schoolwide grading policy that all departments follow, which includes calculating grades based on 50 percent process and 50 percent products. Teachers use rubrics to evaluate student work across subjects, and there are specific rubrics across subjects, such as a systems of equations rubric in math, an argumentative writing rubric in English, and a Chinese performance evaluation rubric. Coherence was evident through rubrics reinforcing instructional shifts from the Common Core based on informational writing across content areas, including English, social studies, and math, and were aligned to Regents exam expectations. All students at the student meeting confirmed the use of rubrics. One student reported during the student meeting about using a rubric during Global Studies, “I received a four out of five and the skill I needed to improve was to prove the claim. The rubric was asking the class to provide evidence to fit the topic. It asks how is that relevant and I had to clearly explain that evidence.” Standardized grading policies and rubrics offer a clear portrait of student mastery.

- To track student progress and inform instruction, common benchmarks are administered four times per year and are aligned with Regents exams in core classes. In addition to new content, topics that presented difficulty for students in previous units are revisited in benchmark exams until proficiency is demonstrated. An emphasis is placed on essay writing, especially text-based essays that are required on Regents exams. Teachers analyze benchmark results for each question, identifying both individual student scores and trends in student responses to similar questions in order to differentiate instruction to suit the needs of each class and individual. For example, a Geometry Regents review calendar was revised based on analysis of data. As of May 2019, evidence of increased mastery for all students included 89.2 percent of students with IEPs and 98.3 percent of ELLs who were on track to earn 10 credits for the 2018-2019 school year.
# Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

## Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students.

## Impact

Teachers hold each other accountable for instructional capacity through structures such as team inquiry work. School staff provide clear, focused, and effective feedback and guidance supports such as College Now to ensure that students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

## Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations to provide feedback utilizing the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* as the standard for professionalism, quality instruction, and high expectations. A weekly administrative bulletin is emailed to all faculty and staff to inform them of upcoming events for the week, instructional tip of the week, all professional development, and guidance and inquiry protocol minutes. A professional development calendar makes clear that school leaders support teachers in their understanding of expectations. Mutual accountability exists for teachers in inquiry-team work that focuses on identified Black and Latino males who are targeted focus students as teams hold each other accountable for closing the achievement gap related to the school’s focus on culturally relevant instruction. A teacher reported, “Our coherent set of beliefs is everywhere and we hold each other accountable to meet those expectations.”

- The school’s culture for learning consistently communicates high expectations that help prepare students for their next level of education. At the end of each marking period, students’ grades are organized into three categories indicating credit accumulation and displayed in a color-coded credit grail. Student progress for all groups is monitored at the end of each marking period and used to drive weekly guidance and inquiry meetings. The “Are You Green?” bulletin board is maintained in the school in different locations to keep students aware of credit goals. Each semester, the school offers six college courses through College Now, where students earn dual high school and college credit through Baruch and LaGuardia Community College courses. The number of College Now courses that the school offers onsite has increased from two per term in 2016-2017 to six per term in 2018-2019, allowing some students to graduate with up to 30 college credits already completed in the CUNY system. In eleventh grade, 61.5 percent of students are taking college courses and in twelfth-grade, 79 percent of students are taking college courses.

- Clear, focused, and effective feedback and guidance supports aligns to high expectations for all students. The Office of College Advisement focuses on the college application process and preparedness after high school, such as coordinating SAT prep courses and financial aid workshops. In addition, the school has partnered with the LEEP, a high school transition and college readiness program that meets weekly with all grade levels for a term to support college and career readiness. The school has a graduation rate of 93 percent, which is 18 percentage points above the citywide average and 9 percentage points above its comparison group; a College Ready rate of 71 percent, which is 20 percentage points above the citywide average and 11 percentage points above its comparison group and a post-secondary enrollment of 81 percent, which is 20 percentage points above the citywide average and 11 percentage points above its comparison group. The school has taken students on eight college trips this school year ranging from Borough of Manhattan Community College to Yale University. Students reported that they are prepared for the next level and one student at the student meeting was accepted to Yale University this year.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Findings**

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Across the school, grade teams meet on a consistent basis to analyze assessment data and student work products, as well as to share teaching strategies.

**Impact**

Professional collaborations have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and resulted in schoolwide instructional coherence. Systematic analysis of student data and work products has resulted in mastery of goals for focus groups of students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- An observed ninth-grade inquiry team meeting involved teachers examining student work from a global history assignment comparing King Louis XIV and Peter the Great. The team looked at essays of identified students and focused on student use of textual evidence to support their conclusion. Teachers asked questions of the presenting teachers, and used the social studies writing rubric to assess the writing. After the teachers discussed and reviewed, the presenting teacher reviewed their feedback. Teachers completed the notice and wonder protocol. Through the discussions of the grade-level inquiry team, teachers identified what students still need support with, including extensions for one of the students and a checklist for another. A teacher spoke about how the work of the team has strengthened teacher instructional capacity stating, "Most of the students we share and we meet to review the supports we provide. When I see the reteaching in my class, we reflect and reinforce writing skills in general, we see their common mistakes. In looking at other content areas we can see the strengths of the students and put the higher students into the honors class. During these meetings, we take those next steps, such as creating checklists to support students writing paragraphs."

- On Thursdays in each grade team meeting, a teacher presents student work as another team member facilitates the Looking at Student Work Protocol, and the remainder of the grade-level teachers ask probing questions of the teacher to arrive at next steps. Teachers are scheduled to present their students’ work on a rotating basis, and the student work shared is of the students in the school's focus group of Black and Latino males. Minutes and outcomes are shared with all staff across the school via email through the weekly administrative bulletin. Common planning teams are structured based on teacher courses. Each team includes a member of the School Implementation Team (SIT) in all core courses. Teachers either meet in team A or team B depending on the focus of the activity. Each common planning has a specific focus such as the pacing calendar, uniform midterm or final examination creation, or student work analysis. The work of teacher teams had resulted in schoolwide curricular coherence.

- Because of teacher teams’ systematic inquiry work in focus groups, increased student achievement for all learners and mastery of goals for groups of students are evident in that the achievement gap between the focus group and rest of student body decreased from five percent to four percent from November to January. The percentage of focus group students placed in honors courses increased from four percent in the fall semester to 30 percent in the spring semester. The percentage of focus group students in College Now and/or Advanced Placement courses increased from 29 percent in the fall semester to 47 percent in the spring semester. The percentage of focus group students on track for earning five credits for the spring semester increased from 58.14 percent to 83.3 percent between the first and second marking periods. As of May 2019, 85.7 percent of the focus group students are on track to earn 10 credits for the 2018-2019 school year.