Quality Review Report

2018-2019

Union Square Academy for Health Sciences
High School 02M533
40 Irving Place
Manhattan
NY 10003

Principal: Bernardo Ascona

Dates of Review:
November 1, 2018 - November 2, 2018

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

Union Square Academy for Health Sciences 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Well Developed</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>
<td>Proficient</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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements including assessment data and student work for students they share. Distributed leadership structures are embedded across the school through grade team and content area teacher leaders.

Impact

Teacher engagement in systematic analysis of student data and work products results in mastery of goals for groups of students and improvements in teacher practice. Effective teacher leadership plays an integral role in key decisions that positively affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers on the social studies inquiry team used the ATLAS protocol to guide their analysis of student work that included group presentations on the topic of the Meiji Restoration and whether it had a negative or positive impact on Japan. In the meeting observed, the teachers had roles assigned including note keeper and timekeeper. The teacher who brought the student work samples shared the context of the assignment and how they related back to the lesson. Teachers reviewed the student work using post-it notes prior to sharing out their findings with group members. As they reviewed the student work, teachers were looking for evidence of a thesis statement, evidence to support the thesis statement, and a counterclaim. Observations shared by the teachers were low inference. Teachers used a task-related rubric to identify what was needed to improve the work relative to each level of the rubric. Next steps identified for teacher practice to improve student outcomes included how to support thesis creation, student writing, and follow through.

- Mastery of goals for groups of students is evident by the increase in the school’s college readiness rate from 50 percent in school year 2016 to 2017 to 53.3 percent in school year 2017 to 2018, due to the focus on inquiry work of English and math teams. Teachers indicated the impact of the work with teacher teams not only demonstrated increased student achievement in college and career readiness, but also helped them improve their professional practice. When comparing the previous two years Advance ratings there was an overall year-to-year increase in classroom practices as an outgrowth of the inquiry process.

- Embedded distributed leadership is evidenced by grade team and content area teacher-leaders who also represent their colleagues as members on the instructional cabinet and the school professional development committee. Inquiry team teacher leaders work with their grade team teacher leaders to develop inquiry cycles so that teams define an inquiry problem of practice, develop an action plan and then analyze artifacts of classroom practice such as tasks and lesson plans, student work, and assessment data, to assess its impact on student achievement. Inquiry teacher leaders also lead both content and grade teams in aligning school-level and individual-student data to inform revisions in the curricula. Feedback from teacher content or grade teams guides the agendas and calendars each month for professional learning.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best through using the essential skills as noted in the school’s instructional focus. Student discussion is evident across classrooms.

Impact

Students produce meaningful work products linked to essential skills and take part in discussions that generally reflect high levels of student thinking and participation; however, student ownership was evident in some but not the vast majority of the classes visited.

Supporting Evidence

- During an oral-anatomy dental class, students worked in groups and used dye wax to mold on to teeth and models of jaws. Students had a handout with steps and an exit slip with reflection questions. Although there was some peer-to-peer feedback, there was no mechanism to formally capture that feedback. Some students in groups were working individually, however student-to-student discussion and collaboration was not evident for all students. During an anatomy and physiology class, students created three-dimensional models for skin, hair, and sweat glands. Some students worked with partners and the teachers rotated throughout the room checking in with students. Three students did not have a chance to work directly with peers. During an earth science class, students used laptops and Google Classroom to collaborate on a document with their table partners around telling a story of the rock cycle and how they think the rocks felt during each stage of the cycle. A coherent set of beliefs was not evident across the vast majority of classrooms.

- At the beginning of a U.S. history lesson on Andrew Jackson, students sat in a rectangle format working on an anchor problem. Students used their handout of a text, writing individually and answering the anchor question. The teacher asked questions and individual students were called on for responses. Additionally, students were given an opportunity to turn-and-talk with a partner as they worked on the three reasons portion of the handout, using the text to support answers. Some students worked individually doing the activity and filled out the form. During an English I core class, the teacher read the poem “We Wear the Mask” to students and asked questions. Students were sitting in groups and had an opportunity for a turn-and-talk, and a few students shared out their group’s discussion. Some students had opportunities to answer questions and participate in a class-wide discussion; however, as a few students were called on multiple times many other students did not have a role in the class wide discussion.

- During an Algebra I lesson on functions and intercepts including absolute values, students were sitting in groups. Student voice was equitable in answering teacher-posed questions, who also asked “Can I get a new student?” prior to choosing a student to respond. During a geometry lesson about how to determine angle value and its connection to 180 degrees, the teacher had students raise hands to read the driving question, learning intention, and anchor. During a pharmacy law lesson based upon a case study about the death penalty and use of drugs to kill prisoners, different groups of students represented the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the prisoners. Students were actively listening while the teacher facilitated the discussion. During an AP English Literature class, students exchanged papers to offer feedback to peers about how to improve the thematic statement of their essay. Across classrooms, student discussion and participation generally reflected high levels of thinking in many, but not the vast majority of visited classes.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
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</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 through the essential skills documentation.

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 through essential skills.

Supporting Evidence

- Content areas use a curriculum map template that is aligned to unit plans and lesson plans. Vertical maps created by content teams are used by teachers to build skills from grade-to-grade. A schoolwide lesson plan template is used by teachers to write their lessons. Furthermore, instructional alignment between curriculum maps, vertical maps, and lesson plans is supported by staff using an essential skills document, which ties how questioning, research, and investigation are embedded in tasks across the documents. Common-core aligned lesson plans, unit plans, and curriculum maps reflect the integration of the instructional shifts across content areas, such as lesson plans in English emphasizing the value of text-based evidence. The math instructional shift of application is included in cross-curricular documents such as how science and math merge essentials skills. For example, in a grade-nine science curriculum map, students are to integrate the application of correct math values to a lab assignment. Additionally, a grade-ten science curriculum map connects algebraic equations to geological concepts; a grade-eleven science curriculum map tasks students with interpreting how an equation can be displayed in a graph and determining the type of graph it would represent; and a grade-twelve science curriculum map connects algebraic equations to chemical concepts. The essential skills strategies result in coherence across grades and subject areas while promoting college and career readiness.

- Lesson plans include tasks that consistently challenge students to utilize rigorous habits in the course of instruction. Learning objective statements in lesson plans include students citing strong evidence to support the analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as drawing from the text to determine where the text leaves matters uncertain. An eleventh-grade oral-anatomy lesson plan requires students to clarify their understanding of the purpose and function of a wax-up in restorative dentistry. Additionally, students are required to consistently write and connect their writing to evidence from the text across grades and subjects, including in an earth science lesson plan where the objective asks students to analyze various components of the rock cycle by discussing text and composing a literary piece in small groups. Lesson plans also consistently detailed high-level questions as found in an Algebra I lesson plan that asked students to utilize equations to solve problems, and in a ninth-grade English lesson plan that asked how writers lead readers to understanding things without telling explicitly. Students are held to high levels of rigor in a twelfth-grade Pharmacy Law lesson plan that asks them to analyze how statutes of limitations affect pharmacy practice.

- In an AP Literature class, students learn to analyze poets’ style and structure to reveal complex meanings in their poems. In a geometry class, students use their prior knowledge of interior and exterior angles and apply what they were taught the previous day to complete work around the triangle sum theorem. Thus, across content areas, teachers are including academic tasks that emphasize rigor and higher-order thinking.
Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices offer a clear portrait of student mastery. School leaders and teachers use common assessments to create a clear picture of student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas and track student data.

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 inform teacher team inquiry work.

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. An example from a social studies colonial era long essay reads, “This is your thesis, but it needs to go at the END of your intro. If you don’t have it in the correct location, you can actually lose points on the actual exam. Be sure to put it in the right spot next time.” Examples from a history essay include, “This is more of a fact than a claim. Try to make it more based on the argument you’re trying to make in this essay rather than something that happened. Claims should always be partially your opinion,” and “In order to get points for context, you’d need to define this concept, and possibly even explain how it works.” Students spoke about the meaningful actionable feedback they received from their teachers. “Feedback happens in every single class. We have a rubric to use for a specific exercise in all of our classes. Our teachers want to make sure we are doing the exercise correctly and give feedback about what we are doing wrong that help us improve.”

- All departments follow a schoolwide grading policy. This includes teachers using rubrics to evaluate student work across subjects such as ones for grading individual art projects, for chemistry assignments, an exponential word problem in math, and an original persuasive speech. Rubrics give actionable and meaningful feedback to students as they guide them before, during, and after the assignment to drive improvements in work products. Teachers provide feedback electronically via Google Classroom and attach it to rubrics and student work. Students were able to speak to specific rubrics they use in their classes and how they use the feedback to improve their work products and improve their overall grades across classes.

- Common assessments are embedded across grade-level content areas and are aligned with State assessments and standards. Using the data collection system, an excel file using item analysis of questions or items, teacher teams track student data. For example, based on looking at specific student and sub-group results and an item analysis of Regents exam outcomes, the social studies department aligned its work closely to English to support contextualization with a focus on essays. Thus, the results of these assessments enable teachers to address specific standards in subsequent lessons and to provide one-on-one support, small-group instruction, and supplemental activities. At the end of each unit, grade teams make data-informed decisions using formative and summative data to revise the curricula. Evidence of using the results of assessment practices to adjust instruction resulting in closing the achievement gap is apparent in the school’s four-year graduation rate for Black and Hispanic males in the school’s lowest third as it increased from 57.10 percent in the 2016 to 2017 school year to 67.00 percent in the 2017 to 2018 school year.
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 content area and grade teams. School staff provide clear, focused, and effective feedback and guidance supports and arrange for internships in health-related fields 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. Teachers also receive a faculty handbook from school leaders that reviews areas of high expectations such as Chancellor Regulations, grading policy, grade book Skedula, grade books and academic policy. A professional development calendar makes clear that school leaders support teachers in their understanding of expectations by providing opportunities to learn about and engage in activities around topics such as Individual Data Analysis Action Plans and Danielson Engaging Students in Learning with Intellectual Tasks and Groups. A teacher reported, “We hold each other accountable in content area and grade teams.”

- The school’s culture for learning consistently communicates high expectations that help prepare students for their next level of education. Students and families receive individualized college admissions support from the school’s college counselor and through the school’s partnership with College Bound Initiative (CBI). Students also reported that they currently are enrolled in College Now classes at Baruch. Students reported that the school offers SAT prep courses, and in their junior year, they get to participate in college trips. A real-life economics course is included as part of the school’s government class. As a student shared, “We learn to fill out a tax form and develop understanding how to plan our finances through a unit on finance and saving. I learn to prioritize my needs for my future, including resume building.” There has also been an increased number of students who earned a college readiness score on their ELA and/or math Regents exam.

- All students take a Health Core class during their freshman year that is designed to prepare students for the CTE courses they will take in the following grades. This class also functions as guidance for their future by building foundational health career knowledge. A student reported, “I never considered being a pharmacy tech before coming to this school. It was not really something I saw myself doing. However, the teachers guide students through the process and now I’m planning on working as a pharmacy tech.” Students also described an iMentor program that partners them with a mentor from the professional world who helps all eleventh and twelfth graders through the college application process and career advisement. A student commented, “I’m ready to go, our mentors have also played a role in that.” Students reported that they are prepared for the next level of the education.
### Additional Finding

**Quality Indicator:** 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision  
**Rating:** Proficient

#### Findings

School leaders’ effective feedback support the development of teachers, including those new to the profession. Feedback to teachers captures strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

#### Impact

Schoolwide support and supervision practices result in strategies that promote professional growth and reflection. Feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice and supports teacher development.

#### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders provide effective feedback utilizing the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. The feedback includes specific and actionable feedback to improve teachers’ instructional practices. One observation feedback included, “How could you provide more peer-to-peer structures using student roles in groups to differentiate the process of internal group accountability?” This was focused on ensuring that student time spent in groups was accountable to learning outcomes. Another example of feedback from another observation report detailed a next step to provide a clear protocol for student discussion with peers that would push students to be more descriptive and clear in the sentences they created. Thus, effective feedback supports next steps regarding the school’s instructional focus on improving student discussion.

- The school maintains documentation of teacher supervision through a detailed support calendar that includes tracking information for classroom visits/observations, results aligned to teacher-friendly rubric walkthroughs, teacher conferences, leadership development data analysis, student engagement via using questioning and discussion techniques, using assessment in instruction, and coaching and mentoring support. Teacher supervision data is tracked through the support calendar over the course of the year to ensure that teachers’ needs are being addressed. New teachers and those needing additional support to meet expectations following observation feedback are assigned to work with mentors or one of the school’s teacher leaders. During the 2017 to 2018 school year, 75 percent of teachers had an average rating of effective or higher compared to 66 percent of teachers rated effective or higher in the 2016 to 2017 school year, based on the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

- Feedback to teachers shows clear expectations that align to school initiatives to support overall student engagement and improve questioning and discussion techniques. Teachers reported that the support and supervision they receive from school leaders have assisted their development as teachers and helped them improve their work on creating small group tasks and promote student discussion. One teacher reported, “Last year, the professional development series was geared toward us improving our practice and targeted different areas, such as student engagement, questioning, Socratic seminar, and vocabulary strategies.”