



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**New Utrecht High School**

**High School 445**

**1601 80 Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11214**

**Principal: Dr Howard Lucks**

**Dates of review: January 9 - 10, 2007**

**Reviewer: Peter Lewis**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

New Utrecht High School is a long-established high school which is located in the Bensonhurst area of Brooklyn. It serves just over 3000 students across grades 9 through 12. The numbers of students in the school have been increasing over time and it is now significantly over capacity. The proportion of English language learners, at nearly 530 is more than in similar schools but lower than in schools across the City. The proportion of special education students is higher than in similar schools, but about the same as in schools across the City. Approximately 12% of students are Black, 27% are Hispanic, 25% are Asian or Pacific Islander and 38% are White. A higher proportion of students than in other schools have arrived into the country recently. Many of these students were born in China, and the school has needed to modify aspects of its curriculum to cater for their needs. The school is ineligible for Title 1 funding. Attendance is higher than in other schools as a result of the emphasis that the school has placed on this area.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The leadership provided by the principal is outstanding and fully exemplifies the commitment and very high expectations seen throughout the school.
- Assistant principals share the principal's vision for the school and are fully committed to ensuring its success.
- Teachers and support staff ensure that the school's vision is translated into rapid progress for their students.
- The school makes exceptionally good use of data to inform, drive and improve its work.
- The confidence and trust between students and adults is of the best and is backed by a high degree of mutual respect.
- The school has developed a curriculum that is broad, creative, innovative and stimulating.
- The curriculum is very well planned so that it meets the needs of all students in a fully inclusive way.
- The huge commitment shown by all members of the school's 'family' is demonstrated by the degree to which staff and students are excited about coming to school and are proud of their achievements.

### What the school needs to improve

- Refine the good cross-curricular links that already exist so that opportunities are formally planned across all departments through the program for each year.
- Improve instruction even further by identifying accurate projections for the rate of each student's learning based upon their past performance and teachers' assessment of their potential.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well developed school.**

The New Utrecht School is a well developed school that is fully committed to continued development, and which provides a powerful, well thought out and broad curriculum for its students. They are well, and often exceptionally well, taught. Support and guidance are well planned to support learning and, as a result, students achieve at a high level. Very good use is made of a wide variety of information that provides the school with a clear picture of how well its students are doing; how it can best help them to improve and how it will know that it has been successful. These features are so strongly in place because of the degree to which the school is reflective of its practice. Relationships and teamwork are strong and reflected in the respect shown by adults to students and each other, which sets an excellent role model that the students follow well. The school is very much part of its community. Parents are fully involved and share the view expressed by many staff that they are proud to be associated with the school. Students share this sense of pride and recognize the degree to which the school has helped them in building belief in themselves and in the high achievements that result. The school is characterized by a sense of drive and high expectations that enthrust students and staff alike.

### How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school collates and analyzes a wide spectrum of available data and adds to this with a comprehensive range of in-house assessments of students' achievements. Comparisons across subjects, grades and classrooms enable resources and support to be targeted precisely. The focused involvement of teams within and across faculties allows the precise identification of the progress that is being made. This, in turn, supports guidance and support staff in making accurate identifications of where support is most required. Very good systems are firmly established which ensure that English language learners and special education students make very good gains in their learning. The recent development of a software suite linking personal and academic data demonstrates the school's on-going commitment to securing the best for its students. Using this powerful resource, the school has been able to refine its good analysis of the performance of different groups so as to recognize and target their needs much more precisely. In this way, for example, guidance counselors are becoming more readily able to track the rate of student progress across marking periods in order to plan appropriately to address any underachievement. Subject departments make very good use of student assessment in assessing and addressing progress issues, as well as in evaluating their own effectiveness. Particular strengths in this exist in the English and mathematics departments, because of their breadth of involvement across the school, but every department makes good use of data. Comparisons with past performance are well set alongside comparisons with other schools in helping the school to decide whether it is doing as well as it could. This information, together with very refined analyses of students'

performance by ethnicity and gender also enables it to respond well to, for example, the changing context of the school. Overall, data is collected and analyzed in an exemplary way which demonstrates the high expectations that the school has of its own performance in supporting student's development.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school's goals are precise and derived from a thorough understanding of the strengths and areas for development revealed by student data. Development planning is thorough and, because of the degree to which plans are communicated, very well understood across the school community.

The school's newly developed data set is being very well used in identifying students who are in need of intervention. It provides a boost to established systems of tracking student progress and ensuring that they meet the challenging targets that are set for their achievement. For example, because of the continuous nature of the data that is now collated, the school can not only identify and target students who can be moved between levels, it is also able to focus support to ensure that they do not slip back. The school has begun to look at ways in which it can use this information further in tracking the rate of student progress. Targets are set across the whole school through senior staff and departmental discussion. At classroom level, these are put into operation well and regularly involve discussions between teachers, support staff and academic assistant principals. As a result, there is a high degree of shared knowledge about individual students, as well as different groups, who require different levels of support. The school is careful to ensure that social and emotional needs are viewed carefully alongside academic assessments. The needs of higher achieving students are identified with the same rigor and appropriate interventions planned. This has a very positive impact on their learning. These features reflect the very high expectations that characterize the school's work. Parents feel completely involved and are tremendously proud of the progress that the school helps their children to make.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

Planning is clear and aligned with requirements, the curriculum maximizing the opportunities available for students to learn through areas that reflect their interests and capacity. For example, modifications to make the English language arts curriculum slightly slower for English language learners in the early stages of acquisition, bears fruit later when their progress is at least as rapid as their peers'. A good start has been made in establishing links between subjects, but more could be done in formalizing this planning. The majority of teachers demonstrate a high commitment to their students and accept accountability for their learning, recognizing the degree to which students' future learning depends on current work, though there remains scope for greater differentiation. With the effective support of the instructional assistant principals, the school has moved away from

a traditional model of instruction towards one which is more inquiry and group based. Although much has been achieved in helping teachers to use data to plan different activities for different students, good strategies are in place to develop this even further. Across a range of activities students' motivation and enthusiasm is clear, reflecting excitement in learning and respect for each other that is so well modeled by most of the staff. Students know that they can trust their teachers and counselors. They value the different ways in which help is made available from confidential guidance with counselors and the assistance so readily provided in the school's tutoring centers. Attendance is high as a result of the good level of student motivation, as well as because good systems that are in place to monitor student attendance and take appropriate action.

Creative use has been made of the budget and scheduling, ensuring that the curriculum is well resourced, and staff expertise and restricted space best utilized. Appointments are driven by the desire to achieve the best by getting the best, while ensuring that all staff are placed so as to maximize their impact upon student learning.

**Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school has invested heavily in professional development with considerable success. Examples of this can be seen in teachers' increasing confidence in using data to plan for students' different needs and in conferencing with students to assess their needs accurately. The high quality of staff discussion in formal and informal gatherings demonstrates the degree to which this is a school committed to improvement. Extensive strategies for staff development are rooted in the careful selection of staff with particular expertise, and in relation to identified areas for improvement. A good example of this is the appointment of one of the assistant principals who, as well as providing a good lead to the mathematics department, could also take the school's assessment systems to a more advanced level. Across departments there are thorough and well planned strategies for monitoring, support, and guidance. A good understanding of the quality of instruction is developed through well structured pre-conferencing, lesson observation and feedback. Regular meetings between senior leaders focus on what has been learned from these observations, and what action needs to be taken. Staff collaboration is high, seen in a good level of intervisitations aimed at learning from each other. This level of professional respect and trust enables departmental meetings to be open and evaluative. Results are shared, as well as strategies for improvement. The leadership provided by the principal is excellent, exemplifying the commitment and high expectations seen throughout the school. One aspect of this, referred to by teachers, parents and students, is his open door policy. As well as being exceptionally visible through the school, members of what one student described as 'our family', can and do seek his advice. He has taken the lead in building excellent relationships with the community, so that the school has ready access to the range of services that it needs to support its students. The school runs smoothly because of the well understood systems that have been developed.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

Using data from student assessments, complemented by information derived from observations and the range of focused discussion, the principal and senior staff have built a very good understanding of the standards reached by students across the school, within and across grades. There are significant and developing strengths in the school's strategies for analyzing its performance and planning for improvement, alongside flexibility in making changes to improve outcomes if it is found to be necessary. School and department plans for improvement overlap well and the lead provided by assistant principals provides a very good layer of day to day support. Staff in the English department, for example have already gone a long way towards establishing and evaluating the impact of links across subjects so that there are clear points of connection between English and the historical aspect of the social studies curriculum. Links elsewhere are less formal, and there is a growing recognition that specific links between subjects such as English and social studies, or mathematics and science could be further exploited.

Regular meetings take place between the principal and curriculum and organizational assistant principals where good use is made of interim assessment data in identifying the degree to which plans are on track and where modifications may be required. This ensures that the school is able to identify the developing impact of initiatives and, in addition, can target resources or interventions appropriately according to the success of initiatives that have been put in place.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: New Utrecht High School (HS 445)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.</b>	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			<b>X</b>
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			<b>X</b>
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.			X
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.			X
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X