

Urban Assembly School Of Music And Art

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Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

This is a newly opened Urban Assembly School specializing in music and the arts, set on the edge of Brooklyn close to the Manhattan Bridge. There are 110 students on roll, all in the 9th Grade with many more females than males. Around two-thirds of students are Black American, a quarter Hispanic and a small number of Asian heritage but none of the students are at the early stages of learning English. Over half of the students qualify for free school meals. Most students enter school with broadly expected levels of achievement for this age.

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Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear and strong commitment to developing students' skills through the arts and music curriculum and an accurate knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The high quality facilities and well-planned arts curriculum provide many exceptional opportunities for students to develop their musical and artistic talents to a high level.
- The school has developed strong, productive relationships with a wide range of partners, which extend students' curricular experiences, especially through their 'Extended Studio Arts Program', which attracts nationally renowned artists.
- There are clear and high expectations of students' behavior. They respond well to these and along with the well-developed relationships seen at all levels leads to a calm and supportive culture.
- The project-based curriculum enables students to develop both collaborative and independent work and research skills.
- The influence of English Language Arts is leading to the well-developed use of reading and writing across a range of subject disciplines.

What the school needs to improve

- The range and quality of the data collected needs to be developed to give a better picture of students' achievement and progress over time, enabling the school to set clear targets for improvement and make regular checks to monitor progress towards these.
- Students need to be involved more in evaluating their own progress to their targets and aware of what they need to do to move forward in their learning.
- The quality of differentiation in teachers' planning needs improvement, particularly in math and science, by using formative data regularly to match the work more accurately to students' individual needs.
- A management team structure needs to be developed, that has responsibility for monitoring the progress of students, through the enhanced use of data, and brings greater accountability across the school for students' achievements.
- The school improvement plan needs to bring together all of these areas for development and show clear lines of responsibility, timescales and measurable success criteria.
- Students' attendance levels and punctuality need improvement through better using the available data to set targets for classes or advisory groups and to provide parents with more regular information on attendance and punctuality so they are clear about the school's aims and expectations.
- Continue the work already started to develop the arts curriculum across all subjects to develop and consolidate students' skills

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Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school

This is a proficient school that is beginning to develop its areas of strength, particularly in arts and music and the English Language Arts and use these to influence the scope and sequence of the curriculum. There is a well-developed culture in the school and students respond to well planned instruction.

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

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is overall undeveloped.

The school gathers a range of data but is not yet at the stage of using all of this to influence instruction and increase students' rate of progress. The school is beginning to use the data it has to evaluate the performance of students and the overall performance of the school in different subjects. However, it has not gotten to the real detail behind all of the data it has and cannot relate this to overall students' performance.

A workable model is being developed by the English Language Arts faculty to assess performance and tracks students' growth. The teachers in this faculty understand how to use project-based work and have developed helpful rubrics for calibrating students' work. Here, the teachers grade work almost daily and are clear about the next steps in students learning. This is giving them clear evidence of outcomes, the progress students are making in reading and writing and having is a positive influence the curriculum and instruction.

However, this depth of evaluation is not seen in the other major subjects. It is particularly lacking in math and science, the impact of which is to hold up students' growth and depress their overall standards. The high number of failures in math and science is also pulling down the overall pass rate to 85.6% despite the number of students attaining high grades in English. There is too high a failure rate in these subjects that comes in part from teachers not being clear about what students can already do or what they now need to work on to improve their performance. To improve overall performance, these subjects need further development to improve both instruction and performance, including a system to align the curriculum more accurately to students' needs and calibrate judgments on standards. The school needs to establish a clear system for when the next group of students enters the school.

Quality Statement 2: 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 proficient overall.

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Many students arrive with performance below grade level. An amount of helpful data is available but at present this is not sophisticated enough. Although it does provide the school leadership with information on performance in each subject. In English Language Arts the teachers grade students' work and give guidance on the next steps they need to take. They are also encouraging students to analyze their own work although much of this at present is through informal discussion, including the involvement of advisors and parents and there are no well-developed record sheets to chart the progress of individual students. However, the influence of English Language Arts throughout the school is leading to the well-developed use of reading and writing skills across a range of subject disciplines.

Other than in English Language Arts, there is no detailed analysis by subject, class group or individual student, which would allow the school to track students' growth with the level of detail needed to influence future performance, the scope and sequence of the curriculum and the quality of instruction. With the school being new, there is little opportunity for detailed collaborative planning other than in the larger faculties of English and math where there is more than one teacher. While in English collaboration is well developed, this is not seen to be at the same level in math and science.

Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient overall, with some well-developed elements.

The arts and music curriculum is well developed and much is being achieved that is improving students' performance. The strengths in this area are in developing integration of the arts and music curriculum across the school and the opportunities for collaborative working between students. This is being well supported by the high quality facilities available in the school and well-planned arts curriculum. As a result, this is providing many exceptional opportunities for students to develop their musical and artistic talents to a high level. This is also being further enhanced by the strong, productive relationships the school has developed with a wide range of partners to extend students' curricular experiences. Of particular note is the 'Extended Studio Arts Program', which attracts musicians and artists of national renown and inspires students to achieve highly. There is a need to continue the work already started to enhance the arts curriculum across all subjects to develop and consolidate students' skills. However, there are some aspects such as assessing goals and plans for students' learning in some subjects that are underdeveloped. Where it is a regular feature of classroom work, the project-based curriculum enables students to develop both collaborative and independent work and research skills.

Students' attendance levels and punctuality need improving. The school does not use the available data it has, for example, to set targets for classes or advisory groups and use this to encourage regular attendance. There is also the need to provide parents with more regular information on attendance and punctuality so they are clear about the school's aims and expectations and their role in the partnership.

Quality Statement 4: 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 overall proficient.

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The principal has a clear and strong commitment to developing students' skills through the arts and music curriculum and uses his own well-developed talents to support this. He has an accurate knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There are well-developed systems for the recruitment and selection of teachers that also involve teachers in the faculties in the selection process. For those teachers currently in post, all of whom started at the beginning of this school year, there are regular opportunities for professional development, particularly thorough the work with their lead partner in the Urban Assembly. These partnerships are well developed and give the teachers in a new school situation the opportunity to work with experienced educators and benefit from their knowledge and experience. Teacher observations have enabled the principal to develop an understanding of strengths and weaknesses in instruction, performance and the outcomes of students' projects. This data has enabled the schools' leadership to compare performance and begin to put in place interventions to address differences. These have been more successful in some areas than others and not everyone is receptive to changes.

To move progress even faster, there is now the need for a school management team structure to be developed. This group needs to take shared responsibility for monitoring the progress of students through the enhanced use of data and bring greater accountability across the school for students' performance. Alongside this a detailed school improvement plan needs to be created that will bring together all of these areas for development, show clear lines of responsibility, timescales and indicates measurable success criteria.

Quality Statement 5: 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 underdeveloped.

Teachers know their students well but much of this is from informal assessment. The school uses the data it has from students' grades at the end of marking periods to evaluate the performance of individuals and the overall performance of different subjects. The grading rubrics in English Language Arts enable these teachers to measure students' progress and performance over shorter periods of time as they work towards their grade level. This allows for early interventions where needed. However, this is not seen elsewhere. Additionally, there is little evidence of detailed feedback or grading of students' work in many subjects. While this feedback does take place orally, the written feedback is not sufficiently detailed or perceptive. As a result students do not have a clear enough understanding of where they are going and the sequence of instruction is not adapted sufficiently well to address weaknesses in performance.

There are examples that show well-developed links between the arts curriculum and, for example, English Language Arts and how they can enhance students' learning through this close linkage of different aspects of the curriculum. However, this is underdeveloped in subjects such as math and science. As a result, too much of the work is common to all students and is not sufficiently well aligned to their needs in a way that would allow students at different stages and capabilities to work at the appropriate level to accelerate their learning and improve their performance. Where instruction is well aligned to students needs and interests this is leading to greater application by students and in consequence, higher performance.

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Other key observations

There are clear and high expectations of students' behavior. They respond well to these and along with the well-developed relationships seen at all levels leads to a calm and supportive culture. The students themselves say they feel safe and well cared for in school. They consider the school "*identifies and grows talent*", especially in the music and arts curriculum.

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Part 4: Evaluation Criteria Grade Summary

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.	o	✓	+
<p>1.1 The school uses available data (e.g., diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, students work products, standards-based portfolios, attendance, descriptive review, security data, etc.) and generates its own to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of how well each student, classroom, grade level, and other important categories of students and the school are:</p> <p>(1) currently performing, and (2) progressing over time, on English Language Arts, math, and other important academic subjects.</p> <p>Criteria for measuring student progress are "objective" when they are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standards-based, • consistent across students, • capable of revealing progress or a lack of it over time and ways to close the gap between current and expected practice, <p>and when they allow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the performance of different students to be compared, and • learning activity to be broken down into component parts so strengths and weaknesses on each sub-activity may be identified. 	X		
<p>1.2 The school makes effective use of the data to assess the performance and progress of students by racial and ethnic groups, English Language Learners and special education students, and all other categories of interest to the school.</p> <p>{This criterion and the next are partially aspirational as of now. City and State Report Cards and Division of Accountability and Assessment reports provide only some of the necessary data. The NYC DOE will soon provide schools with fuller access to better data.}</p>	X		
<p>1.1 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, racial and ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.</p>	X		
Quality Statement 2: 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.	o	✓	+
<p>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 it develops plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.</p>	X		
<p>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 warranting attention.</p>	X		
<p>2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.</p>		X	
<p>2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. That information is central to setting reasonably challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.</p>		X	
<p>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</p>		X	

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Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	0	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with the school's high expectations and improvement plans and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals.		X	
3.2 Decisions about the use of teacher and student time are based on the organization of the day and week needed to inform teachers about each student's performance and next learning steps, set goals and plans for improved student learning, and implement and continuously improve plans for reaching stated goals.		X	
3.3 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.4 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.5 Teachers are accountable for student outcomes. 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	
3.6 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	
3.7 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
3.8 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.9 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X

Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	0	✓	+
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 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 Leaders, faculty, and staff share the same goals and frequently evaluate themselves, their interventions and each other's plans and interventions, including, when possible, by comparing outcomes across classrooms and schools. The school monitors its performance and tackles weaknesses. Even in areas where the school is successful, leadership is not complacent, but aims to improve further. The goal in all cases is to improve student and school performance and progress.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results and revision of plans takes place in teams.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.		X	
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and are generally followed.		X	

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Quality Statement 5: 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.	o	✓	+
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 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 interim 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 each successive phase of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve students' academic outcomes.	X		