



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Academy of Urban Planning**

**High School 552  
400 Irving Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11237**

**Principal: Monique Darrisaw**

**Dates of review: May 7 - 8, 2007**

**Reviewer: Richard Woolf**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Academy of Urban Planning High School is housed in what was the large Bushwick High School. The school was established four years ago by the present principal. It occupies the fifth and sixth floors of a building that is shared with three other schools. This academic year is the first time it has had four high school grade levels.

There are approximately 443 students enrolled in the school and its ethnic population is made up of 60.9% Hispanic 35.1% Black, 4.0% other. There are 16.0% English language learners and 11.0% special education students which are about the same as similar other City schools. There are approximately 51% female students which is higher than similar schools and just above other city schools, whilst male students at 49% is less than similar schools but on par with other city schools.

Student attendance is currently at 80% which is higher than similar schools but below other city schools. This is a marked increase on previous years. The school is entitled to Title 1 monies for over 90% of its students.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school is a young and developing institution that is beginning to affect the community's perception of high schools.
- The students are respectful of each other and adults in their school.
- The small nature of the school is important for aiding instruction.
- The parents are positive about the teachers and the school's high expectations.
- The principal is supported by her assistants in a professional way as does the whole teaching staff.
- The positive attitudes displayed by all associated with the school will be important as it improves its graduation rates.

### What the school needs to improve

- A more strategic whole school approach to development and planning by establishing rigorous goal setting and monitoring systems.
- Better overall use of data to inform all aspects of student progress.
- Teachers to be held more accountable for instruction through better use of student data and differentiation.
- There should be more challenging targets set to demonstrate overall development of students.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is an undeveloped school.**

The Academy of Urban Planning is coming to the end of its first cycle with a full intake of students covering grade 9 through 12. In moving the school forward the principal has to face many challenges including the transference from a large single building school to four smaller ones with shared accommodation and classes spread over two floors. The appointment of new staff and issues relating to lack of achievement of students and other related issues such as setting codes of behavior and establishing a positive work ethos.

The staff realizes they have not tackled all the issues to demonstrate sufficient progress to date. However they now have an opportunity for reflection and reappraisal and to develop their goals, targets and aspirations based on the use of data. The school recognizes that having data in folders does not translate into improved student outcomes without detailed analysis and application of the information. There are instances where data has informed instruction, but it is too inconsistent. The school believes that grade level staff meetings may be the answer to this problem, but it is too early to judge their impact on the achievement of the students.

The drive and determination of the principal and her assistant principals is evident for all to see, and has resulted in considerable improvement. Should the pace of improvement that has so far been secured be maintained, and goals are set for staff and students that are challenging but achievable, there is a good capacity for improvement in student achievement.

### 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 undeveloped.**

The administration uses data based on the official City and State tests, but has not interrogated the resulting data with the rigor required to move individual classes, students or grade levels forward. The administration produces a great number of graphs and charts and can demonstrate knowledge and understanding as to what they mean and how they can be interpreted to move the school forward, but some staff are currently finding it more difficult to use data to match the work to the needs of students with sufficient accuracy. Some whole school cohort data is used for item analysis work and comparisons are made between the cohorts on entry, but it is too early to assess the impact this has on the learning of the students.

English language learners and special education students have their needs identified by the appropriate use of data and teachers use this information well to assist in setting target and identifying the strengths and weaknesses of students. The same identification strategies are not used with sufficient consistency to analyze cohort data based on ethnic grouping, gender or the needs of higher achieving students. The school does not make

comparisons of data against similar schools to measure its performance and as yet little use is being made of year on year cohort data to show progress over time. The school understands that more effective use of data would allow them to set students more challenging targets, but at present these systems are not sufficiently embedded.

**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 undeveloped.**

The Comprehensive Education Plan is written annually by the senior leadership team. Goals are based upon the data from the previous year and semesters and the challenge is to achieve the highest possible graduation rate with school’s first grade 12.

The school has used data to identify reasons for the students not achieving as highly as possible and as a result they have made changes to improve writing skills throughout the school. The monitoring of this initiative to judge its overall effectiveness is still on going. Goals are shared with the staff at the beginning of the school year but as yet the principal has not set individual teacher targets. The administration does not analyze cohort data sufficiently well enough to inform further planning with the view to setting challenging targets for individual teachers.

The needs of English language learners and special education students are met well as a result of the detailed analysis of data but insufficient attention has been given to meeting the needs of higher achieving students or students from different ethnic groups.

The administration is exploring how data can affect overall student improvement but this is at a very early stage and it is too soon to measure the impact on learning. Students are not always aware of their individual rates of progress but speak positively about what is expected of them and gaining the highest Regents score possible. Some students said they did not know what they needed to do to progress to higher levels.

Parents are encouraged to be active partners in their child’s learning. However, due to the school’s recent past, increasing parental involvement is a strong challenge for the principal and her staff. Initiatives, like the ‘retreat’ has been used in the past as a positive key driver for reflection on the whole school community.

**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 proficient.**

The school follows the mandatory curriculum framework for achieving the Regents examinations. Students are taught lessons in art, music and physical education, in order to give them a more rounded education as well as a number of interesting and challenging electives. In addition the students are exposed to very innovative work based on the theme of urban planning. This was evidenced by the active participation of students, using high end computer software during the lessons. The entire campus is aided by The Life

Center to provide students with young children the opportunity for childcare facilities whilst they return to school.

The school does not hold all its teachers as accountable for instruction as might be reasonably expected when challenging students to continuously improve by the better use of data. Some teachers are not using sufficiently differentiated techniques within the classroom, an outcome which was at odds with the professed views of the principal. Data folders held by the teachers show how they record progress made by individual students. The vast majority of class instruction encouraged active participation by the students in their learning and they worked together in groups or as a whole class. Students felt the organization of extra curricular programs after school, on a Saturday and during holiday periods was beneficial to improving their attainment. They felt the teachers planned instruction to get the best out of them. The small size of the school helps both staff and students to get on well and students feel there is always an adult on hand to help and support them.

The principal bases her staffing and budgetary decisions on all available data and has clearly identified where deficiencies have occurred in the past and this has prompted her to hire new teachers and administrators. The use of data has led her to make scheduling decisions as a means of assisting the deployment of her students and staff. This has led to negotiations with the other campus principals over the use of shared facilities. Assistant principals and counselors are used effectively in supporting the staff in the development of instruction and the achievement of their goals.

A priority for the school is increasing its rate of attendance which currently is on target to being met for the year. To date this is an increase on previous years although they have a long way to go to meet the City wide target. Parents endorse the efforts made to increase attendance and feel the school is making great strides to improve overall rates. The administration has regular conversations with the attendance team to support its work in order to reach the school's target.

**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 proficient.**

The principal's staff selection policy is clear in that new staff have to be personable, knowledgeable and, as befits a small school, excellent team members. The school is still relatively new with a large number of young and inexperienced staff but they are, with the help of the newly appointed teacher tutor, gelling into an affective group within the staff as a whole.

The principal is developing a team who appreciates and understands that their students can succeed in life by being given a positive and encouraging atmosphere in which to learn. Teachers accept that her management style allows them more professional freedom. This has the effect of making the staff feel trusted and valued. There are good opportunities for professional development both from within and outside the school. The data and professional development generated from these ventures is beginning to impact upon instruction and understanding of student need, although it is realized there is still a great deal more to be achieved. The school has scheduled a series of weekly meetings for grade level teachers to meet and discuss the needs of individual students or grade

level related issues. These meetings are generating their own professional development activities as evidenced by the discussion on two students' essay writing techniques.

The principal is setting high standards and demonstrates these to the whole school community on a regular basis. She is respected for being approachable and is a presence in the school. She and her assistant principals' visit staff informally as well as conducting formal classroom observations. The school is well managed and organized, which encourages learning to take place. The parent body responds very favorably to the administration. The principal is cognizant of this and realizes the role parents play in working in partnership with the school and is looking to develop ways of increasing parental participation.

The school has developed many excellent links with a wide variety of outside organizations including academic, sporting and professional groups. They have been put in place to further the learning opportunities of the students and as such are having a positive affect within the school.

**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 undeveloped.**

The Comprehensive Education Plan is in place and has been put together by a representative team of the school's community. However, as a working document there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate how developmental issues are measured and improvements are made.

Teams within the school meet to discuss the effectiveness of instructional programs. Similarly, comparisons are made of student progress across classrooms and grades to measure whether specific programs were having the required impact. The school does not currently monitor with sufficient rigor the progress of individual students at either grade levels or subjects. This hampers it in understanding the degree of progress, or the reasons behind numerical gains in regents passing and graduation rates

The school is able to demonstrate planning and to show some improvement takes place, but its impact upon instruction is limited due to a lack of monitoring.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Academy of Urban Planning (HS 552 )</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		