

**The Urban Assembly Academy Of Government
And Law**

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Part 1: The School Context.

Information about the school

This recently opened Urban Assembly School has 86 ninth grade students on roll and is focused on educating students on a government and law themed curriculum. The school shares the building with five other schools. It draws students from four of the boroughs in New York. Most of the students are Black and Hispanic, in almost equal proportions, with a small number of Asian and White students. There are around 10% special education students and approximately 61% of students are Title 1 Eligible.

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Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is popular with students who appreciate what it is doing to enable them to develop independence and prepare them for college life.
- The principal has a clear view of the direction the school is to take and is planning effectively for growth.
- The well-developed curriculum for Government and Law and carefully planned placements enable the school to fulfill its prime role.
- There are examples of well developed planning, particularly in English language arts (ELA), mathematics and Government and Law classes that are supported by proficient grading systems.
- Relationships between students and teachers are generally good but there are a number of students who are harder to engage with their work and who disrupt the flow of lessons.
- Although limited by the relative newness of the school, good use is made of the available in-house data, which enables the school to ensure students to improve performance through adjustments to programs and groupings.

What the school needs to improve

- Implement a policy of rewards and sanctions, agreed by all teachers and involving students, to improve the behavior of those students who do not conform to the standards of the majority.
- Introduce an effective advisory system to further support improvements to students' attitudes and behavior and reinforce a clearly defined whole-school culture.
- Develop a curriculum overview that shows how the curriculum will grow with the school and create linkage between the subjects and the discrete skills that students need.
- Improve the differentiation in teachers' planning to provide a closer alignment to students' needs, to support the lower performing students and extend those that are higher performing.
- Create opportunities for further professional development for teachers on curriculum planning and progression and on how to use data to better target their interventions. Time for collaborative planning to enable the initiatives in progress to be fully realized would be valuable professional development.
- Develop a system to record and track the progress of individual students in all subjects that will provide better information for use in aligning the curriculum and teachers' planning more closely to their needs.

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Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

It has made effective progress over the year in developing its curriculum and the collection and use of data. Students enjoy school and feel their teachers are very supportive in helping them prepare for the future and admission to college. However, there are issues around the inappropriate behavior of a significant minority of students that prevents others from working at their highest performance level.

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 proficient.

As a new school there is limited data about students' performance over time, other than 8th grade exam results they came in with. To build on these, the school has put in place a proficient system for gathering and using its own data from grading periods to analyze performance by a number of criteria. This generates valuable information at a school level. The principal has carried out a proficient analysis of the data by gender, ethnicity, subject and teaching group. This is valuable in assessing the overall picture within the school and is helpful in tracking the progress of groups of students. There has not yet been the depth of interrogation of some of this data to investigate some of the anomalies this shows. However, this analysis is beginning to develop with the increasing amount of data that the school is now gathering. This data analysis is less well developed at individual student level. The school does not yet have a clear and simple system to record and track students' performance by subject over the year or semester, other than report cards. As a result the administration is not able to see quickly how students are progressing over time or how students' growth can be compared with that of others. This quality of information would enable the school to adjust instruction or the scope and sequence of the curriculum to respond to any changes. However, the school is working on a system that is aimed to enable them to develop this.

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 undeveloped.

Scrutiny of data shows that there has been improvement in most students' academic performance between marking periods since the start of the year. The most significant increase is in performance in English language arts (ELA). This is mostly due to improvements brought about by a well-developed curriculum and detailed daily agenda. It has worked particularly well in the team-taught class in ELA, even though these students are the lower performers and many have behavioral or attitudinal issues to deal with. However, this improvement is not seen in all classes or subjects. This is work in progress for the school. One area identified by the school for improvement from this analysis is in science.

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Additionally, their teachers and school leaders are working on using the data in a more focused way. Aligning this with additional work on data at subject, class and individual students' level is needed to bring greater understanding for teachers as to how they can analyze the results and use this information to generate more effective planning and interventions. This will be an important aspect for the school to get right in the weeks leading up to the new semester.

The lack of an effective system to record and track the progress of individual students in class or home groups across all subjects in a simple way is slowing aspects of progress. Better analysis of this data through, for example, a simple spreadsheet system would enable teachers to identify where students need to improve and enable them to better differentiate their planning to provide a closer alignment of task to students' needs. This would enable better support for the lower performing students and provide extension work for those that are higher performing and better information for parents. Additionally, this would also provide opportunities for improving advisory work to make it more effective in supporting students' progress and growth more effectively

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.

Within the school's guiding aims of providing instruction in Government and Law, there is a rigorous curriculum that progressively takes students through the key features of social equality and personal rights and responsibilities. The lesson content has a high interest level for most students who respond well to the discussions that take place in class, often with perceptive comments and viewpoints. To support this growth, the tasks and projects in lessons are linked well to a grading system that shows students what they need to do to gain points that lead towards a grade level. The feedback to students on these assignments helps them see where they can improve their work in an effort to raise their grade. This curriculum is also well supported by the partnerships that have been built up between the school and professional organizations, for example, law practices.

The data that has been collected has been used well in both ELA and mathematics to analyze the performance of groups of students and where similar needs have been identified. This has been used to break down the original teaching classes into more homogenous groups. This adjustment has helped to narrow the range of instruction and simplify planning demands on teachers. The impact of this can be seen in improvements to grade scores at the end of successive marking periods, particularly in ELA. However, even where the range of performance in a class has been narrowed, there are still some issues to address around the accurate alignment of work to students' needs in both ELA and mathematics. There is no common approach across the school that would allow students at different stages and capabilities to work at a more appropriate instructional level that would accelerate their learning. Where instruction is more accurately aligned to students' needs or the teaching and learning styles provides greater interest for students, this is leading to greater application and concentration and improved performance as seen in ELA.

The provision for supporting students' social and emotional development has some weaknesses. With the abandonment of the previous advisory system there is no process that could be targeted at improving students' attitudes and behavior and reinforce a clearly defined whole-school culture. As yet this has not been replaced with a system that would enable teachers and advisors to counsel students about their work and attitudes. While most students want to work and apply themselves to the tasks at hand, there is a significant minority who cause disruption to classes and prevent others from making the progress they are capable of. There is no clear policy of rewards and sanctions in the school, agreed by all teachers, consistently applied and that actively involves students. This is needed to

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improve the behavior of those students who do not conform to the standards of the majority.

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.

The leadership of the school is developing judgment and the principal has a clear view of the direction the school should go. There is not yet a clear overview of the curriculum to guide the school's work over the next two years and beyond as it grows. This is needed to demonstrate progression in the scope and sequence documents and enable teachers at different grade levels to have a better understanding of what has gone before or what they are working towards. It will also enable teachers to adopt or adapt parts of their planning to use the grade level rubrics for other grades to provide extra support or extension work. This can be used to fill in gaps in students' knowledge or provide appropriate extension for those Honor Roll students who have the capability to work at a more advanced level. This should also be used to create links between the skills students need to develop and other subjects of the curriculum.

The changes to the school for next year with the addition of a 10th grade curriculum and the departure of a number of the current teachers presents the school with a challenge of replacing these with a team that can quickly be bonded into a cohesive unit. Currently, collaborative planning is taking place but in such a small school this tends to be ad-hoc and relies on teachers in subject departments creating opportunities for themselves. While this works in ELA, as seen in the good work done in the collaborative teaching class, it is not seen elsewhere. There are not enough planned opportunities for teachers to engage in professional development that is focused around curriculum development, planning and progression.

While the principal's use of the data available is proficient, he recognizes there is still much work to do to make this more accessible and useful to classroom teachers and so produce a greater impact on instruction and learning. There is also no consistent system for grading students' work that can be applied by all subject faculties. Currently there are several approaches in use. Most of these are positive and provide students with clear guidance on how they have performed and reward effort but some do contain more negative and punitive measures. One weakness in most of these is that while they all reward completion of tasks, in most there is little credit given to the quality of the work produced that could spur students on to achieve higher grades.

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 overall proficient.

Teachers know their students well but much of this is also 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. However, there is less evidence of detailed feedback on students' work in many subjects. Where feedback is seen it tells students what they need to improve but does not follow this up with strategies they could apply to address these weaknesses. As a result students know what they have to improve but do not know clearly what they need to do to make these improvements and there is no indication in students' subsequent work that the sequence of instruction has been adapted to remedy this. This is under developed in all subjects.

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As a result, too much of the work is the same for all students and is not closely enough aligned to their individual needs.

In studying the data and work of students, it is clear that the school has used the data available to track progress between marking periods and to identify aspects of their work that need improvement. However, where grades from marking periods have shown a decline over the year, for example, there are no clear interventions in place that have addressed this. Where there are changes such as this, the school needs to look at the range of approaches to planning and instruction, and whether the work and learning styles need to be modified to improve the rate of application.

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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, mathematics, 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>1.3 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		