

The Urban Assembly School of Business for Young Women

**The Urban Assembly School of Business for
Young Women**

**420 East 12th Street
Manhattan
NY 10009**

principal: Patricia Minaya

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Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

This is a newly opened single gender Urban Assembly School specializing in business, situated in East Village. There are 103 students on roll, all in the 9th grade. Around two-thirds of students are Hispanic, a quarter Black and a very small number are White and Asian. Only one student is at the early stages of learning English. A very high number are Title 1 Eligible. Most students enter school with levels of achievement at or near expectations for their grade and age. The school has faced the considerable challenge of working in a very restricted space and is looking forward to this expanding in the next academic year. However, it still requires a more suitable location in order to be able to implement the innovative work it has planned for the future.

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Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision of what she wants to achieve and has provided outstanding, focused and effective leadership which has meant that a great deal has been realized in a short time.
- The principal has an accurate knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and what it needs to do to continue to improve. Prompt action is taken to address these issues.
- She is successfully building a team who share a commitment to nurturing individuals in a supportive environment. Trusting relationships are being built which students and parents value and look forward to this developing further in the future.
- There has been meticulous planning of the curriculum, particularly in English, to meet the specific needs of the school's students. Teachers respond rapidly to adapt programs when monitoring reveals that changes are required.
- The principal has a clear and strong commitment to developing students' skills through the integration of the business curriculum.
- The influence of English language arts is leading to the well-developed use of reading and writing across other subject disciplines.
- There is a good use of carefully focused staff development including in house mentoring and the effective use of experienced educational consultants in order to continue to build the effectiveness of the instructional team.
- The school has developed strong, productive relationships with a wide range of partnerships, which significantly extend students' curricular experiences, especially through their relationship with The Urban Assembly Group and Advisory Board. This partnership work is always well focused on the school's core values. These experiences bring learning to life for students.
- Positive and successful role models are used well to empower students to aspire to and expect success in their academic and working lives, for example, Power Luncheons.
- Parents are supportive of the work and principles of the school, particularly that their daughters are valued, well cared for, develop independence and positive attitudes to their academic work.

What The School Needs To Improve

- The principal has recognized the need to develop a more precise and uniform understanding of expectations of standards that is shared across all members of staff.
- The range and quality of the data collected needs to be developed and organized in a way that gives greater consistency and a better picture of students' attainment and progress over time. This will enable the school to set clear targets for improvement and make regular checks to monitor progress towards these. The school is enthusiastic about receiving the tools and support to achieve this objective.
- Students need to be involved more in evaluating their own progress to their targets and be aware of what they need to do to move forward in their learning.
- Differentiation in teachers' planning needs to ensure that work closely matches the need of all students, particularly the most able, so that all students make as much

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progress as they can.

- The school should continue to spread the best teaching practice seen at the time of the review. This was in those lessons which were inquiry based, interactive and investigative and developed student's thinking skills well. This will ensure all students make the best possible progress.
- A management team structure needs to be developed that has responsibility for monitoring the progress of students for example, through the enhanced use of data which will bring greater accountability across the school for students' achievements and reinforce the drive for improvement.
- The principal has clear and high expectations of students' behavior to which students are beginning to respond. Rules need to be consistently applied and reinforced by all adults in school for progress in this area to be maximized.
- The school improvement plan needs to bring together and focus all areas for development and show clear lines of responsibility, timescales and measurable success criteria.

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Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school overall

Which is beginning to develop its areas of strength particularly in business and in the English language arts. It is starting to use these areas to influence the scope and sequence of the rest of the curriculum. The culture of the school is developing well under the very effective leadership of the principal who has achieved much in a short space of time.

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 undeveloped overall.

The school gathers a range of data, but is not yet at the stage of using this to sufficiently influence instruction and increase students' rate of progress. Some teachers are using data to evaluate the performance of students accurately and in doing so get to know the needs of their students very well. They use the information effectively to inform carefully planned and targeted work. There is a developing view of the overall performance of the school in some subjects, However, teachers have not got to the real detail behind all of the data the school has and there is a need to develop a consistent standard throughout the school, between grades and subjects.

The principal has a clear view of what needs to be achieved and is keen to expedite matters. She recognizes that it is essential to develop a more precise and uniform understanding of expectations of standards; one that is shared across all members of staff so that a truly accurate assessment of students' attainment and progress. Though at present, student passing rates are often pleasing, there is no certainty that the quality of the work to achieve a passing grade is of sufficiently high standard. Workable models are being developed involving helpful rubrics for calibrating students' work. The range and quality of the data collected needs to be developed and organized in a way that gives greater consistency and a better picture of students' attainment and progress over time. This would enable the school to set clear targets for improvement and make regular checks to monitor progress towards these. The school is enthusiastic about receiving the tools and support to achieve this objective.

The most effective teachers grade work almost daily and are clear about the next steps in students' learning. Their work gives them clear evidence of the progress students are making in reading and writing and is having a positive influence on the curriculum and instruction. However, this depth of evaluation is not yet universal and consequently too often differentiation in teachers' planning does not ensure that work closely matches the need of all students, particularly the most able. This means that not all students are making as much progress as they can. Progress would be enhanced by students being more involved in evaluating their own progress and therefore being more aware of what

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they need to do to move forward in their learning. These issues need further development in order to improve both instruction and performance before the next group of students enters 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 undeveloped overall but with some proficient features.

Most students start the school at a level of performance that is broadly average. Some helpful data is available when they begin at the school, but at present this is not sophisticated enough to give the teachers valuable insights into what students know, can do and really understand.

Most teachers grade students' work and give guidance on the next steps they need to take. They now need to encourage students to analyze their own work. This should go beyond informal discussion which may include the involvement of advisors and parents and move towards developing a system including record sheets to chart the progress of individual students. This would make the next steps of learning absolutely clear. However, the positive 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. Further development of the schools use of information technology should also expedite this. There is little 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. Despite the school being new, teachers are given regular opportunities to plan collaboratively and the best use needs to be made of these times. The goals for students are not expressed clearly enough and the scope and sequence of the curriculum is not sufficiently aligned to take students from where they are at present through the clear sequence of the steps they need to reach the expected level of performance. However, the school is aware of this and is developing plans to address the issue. The focus has quite rightly been on developing the instructional skills of brand new teachers who now need to develop the skills and tools to become confident with the generation and use of reliable data, which would help to make them more accountable for student performance.

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 features.

The English language arts curriculum is developing well to meet the particular needs of the students and much is being achieved that is improving students' performance. An additional strength is the development of the business curriculum and its related activities, for example its mentoring program, which provides opportunities for collaborative working between students and with partners from outside the school. Daily Power Sessions and Power Luncheons are particularly popular and successful, for example in improving English language, financial literacy and readiness for college. This work is being well

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supported by links with The Urban Assembly. The commitment of the principal to developing an effective and integrated business curriculum which will prepare students well for life after school is also a significant feature of the school. As a result, the school is providing many exceptional opportunities for students to experience and develop their knowledge and understanding of the business world to a high level and also to allow opportunities to improve the communities in which they live. This is further enhanced by the strong, productive relationships the school has developed alongside a wide range of other partnerships which successfully extend students' curricular experiences. Of particular note are the 'Agents of Change Community Program', Time Warner, CNN, CBS, Smith Barney, NASDAQ, NYSE and the Mercantile. Links with higher education establishment need further development. There is a need to continue the work already started to enhance the business curriculum across all subjects to develop and consolidate students' skills and inspire them to achieve even more highly. There are some aspects, such as assessing goals, and plans for students' learning. Where high expectations are a regular feature of classroom work, the project or inquiry based curriculum is stronger. In these lessons teachers develop lively, interactive, investigative, student led discussion and debate that enables students to develop both collaborative and independent work as well as their research and thinking skills. The school should continue to spread the best teaching practice seen at the time of the review to ensure all students make the best possible progress. Student progress was slowed in those lessons which were mostly teacher led, relied heavily on note taking and occasionally gave inaccurate or inappropriate information which did not clearly relate to the learning objective of the lesson. The objectives should always be explained clearly at the outset and referred back to at the end of the lesson when student progress measured should be measured against them. The principal has clear and high expectations of students' behavior to which students are beginning to respond. Rules need to be consistently applied and reinforced by all adults in school for progress in this area to be maximized. Further development of the school's advisory and guidance support systems to include all staff members as planned by the school in line with its culture should help to achieve this goal. Communications with parents is good. Parents feel involved and value the open door policy. They are particularly pleased with the effective principal and the good work the school has achieved in its first year.

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 with some well-developed features

The principal has a clear vision of what she wants to achieve and has provided outstanding, focused and effective leadership which has meant that a great deal has been achieved in a short time. She has a clear and strong commitment to developing students' skills through an integrated business curriculum and uses her own well-developed talents to support this. She has an accurate knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and works with passion and intelligence to achieve the goals of the school. All teachers currently in post are either new out of college or are international teachers in their first post in the USA. They all started at the beginning of this school year. They have regular opportunities for professional development, particularly through the work with their lead partner in the Urban Assembly. This enables them to use internal mentors or highly experienced and effective professional coaches to work on their

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teaching skills. 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 a thorough understanding of strengths and weaknesses in instruction, performance and the outcomes of students' projects. This data has enabled the principal begin to put in place interventions to address weaknesses and variations in practice. These have been more successful in some areas than others and not everyone is receptive to changes, though the principal demonstrates that she is unstinting in pursuing them if they are in the interest of pupil progress and school improvement. 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 proficient overall.

Teachers get to know their students well through using a range of assessments, though in some cases, much of this arises from informal assessment and discussion or using assessments whose rigor may be in doubt. 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 some subjects enable teachers to measure students' progress and performance over shorter periods of time as they work towards their grade level. These measures allow for early interventions where needed and swift adaptation of the curriculum if necessary. However, written feedback is not always sufficiently detailed, perceptive or evaluative. The quality of teaching and the ability to interpret assessment data is not yet consistent enough across different subjects as a result students do not always have a clear understanding of where they are going with their work. In these circumstances, the sequence of instruction is not adapted sufficiently well to address weaknesses in performance. As a result, too much of the work is common to all students and is not sufficiently well aligned to their specific needs. Teachers need to create systems that will allow students at different stages and capabilities to work at the right 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. The principal has been quick to identify this and has put measures in place which are beginning to have a positive effect. A powerful example of this is the highly effective link between the business curriculum and social studies which strongly enhances students' learning. The school has well-developed plans to further extend this.

Other key observations

The premises occupied by the school have imposed considerable restrictions on the development of the school and its curriculum. Despite the school having made the very best use of them that they can, the inadequate facility continues to present a barrier to

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learning. Though additional space has been found in the building to cater for the intake of students in the next academic year, the premises will continue to be a limiting factor on the school's effectiveness.

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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	