



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**The Urban Assembly School for the Performing
Arts**

**High School 336
339 Morris Avenue
Bronx
NY 10451**

Principal: Fia Davis

Dates of review: June 1 - 4, 2007

Reviewer: Corinne Brown

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Urban Assembly School for the Performing Arts is currently located in the Bronx. It is relocating to a permanent base in Harlem during the summer 2007 recess and will continue to serve a high school student population from all over New York City.

This is a college preparatory school in its first year with 81 students enrolled in ninth grade. Almost 10% are special education students and approximately 1% are English language learners. The majority of students, at approximately 51%, are Black. Of the remaining students, approximately 38% are Hispanic, with approximately 1% each of White and Asian/Pacific. At present 74% of the students are Title 1 eligible. Student annual attendance averages 90% which is similar to other city schools.

The school shares the building with three other schools with joint access to facilities such as the cafeteria, auditorium and, particularly for this school, the dance studio.

The school is part of the Urban Assembly schools network, a non-profit organization that creates and manages a community of New York City Public Schools dedicated to preparing students from under-resourced neighborhoods for success in four-year colleges.

The school was granted Empowerment status in September 2006 when it opened. Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The effective principal models the school core values of integrity, community, artistry, respect and excellence in her leadership.
- The school is committed to the use of data as an integral part of its reflective practice.
- The school benefits from the dedication of its teachers and staff who work with enthusiasm to collaboratively move the school forward.
- The inclusion model and intervention programs show positive impact for students.
- Students generally show energetic commitment to the school mission and internalization of the core values.
- High profile partnerships fully support the philosophy and work of the school.
- The school makes strenuous efforts to ensure excellent attendance and punctuality.
- The school works to holistically develop the whole student and engage them through the infusion of performing arts into all content areas and the advisory program.
- Budget, staffing and scheduling decisions are carefully made and adjusted in line with student need as revealed by data.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a cohesive system for collecting all data to facilitate detailed analysis, and eventually to incorporate access for the whole school community.
- Ensure all planning includes goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-related and enable equal access for all students.
- Strengthen classroom and behavior management systems to establish consistency and reinforce high expectations, particularly as the school grows.
- Work to increase parental involvement and accountability.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The Urban Assembly School for the Performing Arts, High School 336, infuses the performing arts through all content areas to deepen the learning experience and increase student engagement. The school is working as a cohesive empowered unit to ensure students are prepared for college or to make other informed career choices by building their confidence and self-esteem, widening their horizons through exposure to the breadth of performing arts and providing students with different means to experience success.

As a small school, in its infancy, there is a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration among staff, and genuine care for the students. The principal is an excellent role model, who leads with passion and is building capacity and self belief in the whole school community. Her performing arts credibility is evident in her positive leadership style and inclusive holistic approach to development of the school, staff and students. She is respected, is firm but fair, and has the support not only of her dedicated staff but the Urban Assembly School network and New Leaders program.

The school is highly reflective and continually aware of its accountability and mission. Data informs decision making, so swift realignment of goals or strategies occurs in the school's collaborative and transparent working practice. Energy, shared vision and enthusiasm are evident across the school as teachers work to improve student outcomes.

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 proficient.

The school is committed to using data effectively as a basis for reflection, decision-making and planning. This includes eighth grade State mathematics and English language arts tests, yearly diagnostic tests and the interim assessments which occur three times a year. As the school is new, there is limited State assessment data, but it regularly uses the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) assessments and reports, in common with its network's practice, to provide standardized data, analysis and strategies. Progress report cards provide good current information for students, parents and staff approximately every nine weeks, or six times a year, and are based on both hard and soft data. The school considers attendance and suspension reports, performing arts assessments and academic intervention information to enable a comprehensive picture of current performance across the school and for individuals. Teachers meet with the principal at weekly 'Kid Talk' meetings to discuss individual and collective student progress which means there is effective ongoing formal review of progress and consequent action. The school is actively seeking a system to organize and disseminate more focused data in a systematic way to ensure it addresses the needs of all students as it expands.

The school primarily focuses on the individual student as it has only one grade and student schedules are individualized. It examines data for identified groups such as special education students and English language learners in order to track progress. For example, through the use of a credit accumulation tracker the school monitors over-aged, under-credited students, and others who fall in the lowest 30% of achievers. This effective system has revealed the positive impact of intervention programs.

The school does not currently deepen data analysis by gender or by subgroup breakdown within ethnicity groupings, but intends to do this as the student population grows. At present there is a significant gender imbalance in its population, with a high proportion of girls on roll, which the school hopes to address as it expands. Within its network the school has no similar schools with which to compare itself, but it is looking at sustainability and development through analysis of its own data.

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 proficient.

With only one grade level at present, the school is working within its opening proposal plan, but revises and realigns in the light of evidence. For example, the school changed from students being taught in cohorts to individualized scheduling based on student behavior data. This change has had some success. With a small staff, collaborative planning occurs as a result of thorough data analysis. Staff expertise is harnessed well for developmental work to inform subsequent planning. The mathematics teacher uses his technology skills to set up data so that, for example, English language arts data can inform decision making in global history. Within its college preparatory performing arts status, the school is working with students, to enable them to understand the relevance and importance of assessment and so holds Town Hall meetings about data and assessment.

The regular meetings to discuss progress mean that identification of students in greatest need is continually revised and timely interventions implemented. Intervention and special education student data for this school show that the inclusion model and intervention programs have positive impact on students’ achievement. As a first year school, the provision for the only English language learner student is provided through collaboration with another school in the building.

The school works hard to share its high expectations, as embodied in its core values and with the school community. The morning welcome circle serves to increase the sense of communal identity and responsibility and there is almost total compliance with the school uniform. The majority of students and parents made a positive decision to be a part of this school community, but there is a small but significant core of students and parents who do not as yet actively support into the school vision.

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.

In this new school the City core curriculum is customized well to promote the performing arts. Students experience one hour each of mathematics, English language arts, global history, health and a performing arts medium every day. This maximizes student exposure and permits informed choice at a later stage. Teachers are dedicated and work enthusiastically and collaboratively as learners themselves to move the school forward. Technology is used to maintain records as well as for assessments but does not yet inform individualized differentiation. Teachers are accountable and are beginning to incorporate technology as an instructional tool within the classroom to motivate students and encourage independent learning. The school recognizes the need to strengthen classroom and behavior management systems to establish consistency, reinforce high expectations and optimize learning opportunities and engagement, particularly as the school grows.

The school is very responsive to information revealed by data. As a result, budget, staffing and scheduling decisions are carefully made and adjusted in line with student need. For example, the school was restructured in the light of data and a second school aide was appointed to deal with security once the need was identified.

Students show differing levels of engagement, commitment to the school mission and appreciation of the core values, with many being highly motivated and energetic. They feel that teachers, “Do everything they can for us”. Students value the time teachers and the principal give to listen to and help them, and that there is a supportive atmosphere in which everyone is known individually. After school opportunities to improve achievement are appreciated by the students, who believe these also exemplify the school’s and teachers’ commitment to the individual.

The school makes strenuous efforts to ensure excellent attendance and punctuality. It sets itself high goals and works intensively with particular students and their family to re-establish good habits. Calls home are made daily 15 minutes after the start of school for every absent or late student, which is a measure of the school’s belief that attendance and achievement are inextricably linked.

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

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

Staff are carefully selected based on data through a considered process, which includes content expertise and desire to infuse the performing arts. Feedback from teachers and students is an integral part of the selection. The principal is continually building school capacity both in her selection of staff and through professional development. She consolidates strengths and interests whilst also addressing the school’s and teachers’ needs. Professional development reflects the school ethos, reinforces staff cohesion, provides skill development and so is empowering and effective. External professional development occurs by content area. There is an evident open, sharing culture within the

current school team. They plan, exchange ideas, observe and support each other well in building and refining the school and its practices. The school team work strongly together to infuse performing arts into all content areas and to make the advisory program relevant, meaningful and valued by the students. As such increasing self-esteem and confidence are seen as part of the school's commitment to holistic development of the student and school community.

The principal is highly respected, knows her staff very well and makes sensitive, yet tactical, decisions to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in the school. She manages her time effectively in order to strategically apply herself in support of teachers through observation and subsequent professional conversation and development. She is supported in her overall delivery of quality leadership by the framework of the Urban Assembly movement, New Leaders and New Schools Intensive programs. As a role model she excels and embodies the school core values of integrity, community, artistry, respect and excellence in her leadership. Because of her organization and management, drive and determination, the school generally runs smoothly.

The school has established high profile partnerships that fully support the philosophy and work of the school. For example, the Apollo Theatre comes into the school to provide insight into different career openings in the arts, the Dance Theatre of Harlem teaches dance classes and Aaron Davis Hall exposes students to high caliber performances.

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 proficient.

As a school in its first year, the school leadership was not involved in its formation, but the school proposal document clearly outlines school's goals. The principal's performance review is aligned with this. The original plans are monitored and have been adjusted during the year to fit with the reality so that, for example, ninth grade do not currently have instrumental music for organizational reasons. This is planned to occur now as they move into tenth grade to ensure maximum exposure to the performing arts. The school monitors its plans carefully as they are now in practice and responds flexibly to any information that indicates this is required. The school changed from delivering the living environment curriculum, for example, as a result of teachers' departures. It made a purposeful decision to implement a health program in its place, which carries accreditation for students. Currently, all data is whole school as there is only one grade, but progress towards goals is measured by comparison with previous data, so that revision occurs as required. The school is aware that the inclusion of goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-related in all planning enables formal and systematic monitoring to ensure equal access for all students. Planning for subsequent years for the school, including growth in student numbers and relocation to a permanent base, is already underway. The original plans, as part of the Urban Assembly network of schools, are being utilized to develop new goals in the light of this initial year's experience with greater involvement of the whole school community. This school has made a strong start in its mission to nurture students and help them towards college and a future in the performing arts.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Urban Assembly School for the Performing Arts (HS 336)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	
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.	∅	✓	+
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"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 		X	
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"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		X	
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"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
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.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* 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.

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.	∅	✓	+
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.		X	
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.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
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.			X
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.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

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.	∅	✓	+
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X	
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.	∅	✓	+
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
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
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.	∅	✓	+
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	