

**Urban Assembly Academy of History and Citizenship for Young Men**

**Urban Assembly Academy of History and  
Citizenship for Young Men**

**240 East 172<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Bronx  
NY 10457**

**Principal: Jonathan Foy**

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# Urban Assembly Academy of History and Citizenship for Young Men

## Content Of The Report

### **Part 1: The School Context**

Background information about the school

### **Part 2: Overview**

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

### **Part 3: Main Findings**

What is the school's overall performance

How well does it meet New York City's evaluation criteria

Other key observations

### **Part 4: Evaluation Criteria Grade Summary**

# **Urban Assembly Academy of History and Citizenship for Young Men**

## **Part 1: The School Context**

### **Information about the school**

The Urban Assembly Academy of History and Citizenship for Young Men opened in September 2004 and presently caters for 178 male students in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades. The school will continue to grow each year and once its development is complete it will provide for up to 532 students from Grades 6 through to 12. The local area is one of significant social and economic deprivation with approximately 80% of the students eligible for free or reduced school lunches. Attainment on entry to the school is generally low; more than three quarters of students start at the school with Levels 1 and 2 in Mathematics and English Language Arts. The school is part of, and receives support from, the Autonomous Zone.

# Urban Assembly Academy of History and Citizenship for Young Men

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The Principal and the Program Director are deeply committed and dedicated professionals who have been effective in fostering a significant improvement in the personal and social development of many of the students. Students are proficient in this regard.
- There are well considered plans for the future management and organization of the school
- Achievement is below the target level set by the autonomous zone, but is improving rapidly, and is proficient overall. In the last year the school has recorded the greatest combined improvement in value added for English Language Arts and Mathematics in the zone. The Mathematics A Regents pass rate was 94%.
- The school is highly regarded by most students and their parents.
- Attendance is below the target level of 90% set by the autonomous zone, but is rising steadily and has gone up from 83.8% to 86.5% in the first 6 months of this academic year.
- Relationships are generally well developed; staff and students get along well together. Behavior is well developed.
- Rewards, including a range of educational visits, are used well to encourage high attendance, good behavior and academic achievement.
- The curriculum is proficient and includes 'Master Scholar' classes and courses in law and order. In addition there is a wide range of elective classes including jewellery making, drama, and a course concentrating on developing employment opportunities in the music industry. These are popular and are well supported by students.
- The school has rapidly established some effective links with community organizations, and further developments are planned.
- The school works well to overcome the physical limitations of the building, classroom space and the facilities available.

### WHAT THE SCHOOL NEEDS TO IMPROVE

- The quality of instruction, which is overall proficient, is too inconsistent, and the school must endeavor to improve achievement by eliminating weak teaching and recruiting more high quality teachers.
- Much of the instruction is too teacher dominated and the staff needs to involve students more actively in their learning so that lessons are more interesting and engage students more effectively.
- Insufficient use is made of pupil performance data to plan work that is sufficiently well matched to the needs of students, particularly higher performing students.
- Inconsistencies in the dress code as applied to staff and students
- The quality of the curriculum is generally proficient, but insufficient emphasis is given to physical education and the use of technology.
- Continue to improve attendance.
- Expand the classroom space and facilities available to accommodate the Grade 11 students in the fall of 2006.

# Urban Assembly Academy of History and Citizenship for Young Men

## Part 3: Main Findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

The Urban Assembly Academy of History and Citizenship for Young Men has achieved some significant gains since its foundation in September 2004 and continues to improve the standards gained in several key areas. There are, however, important areas where further improvement is still required. The school is proficient overall.

#### **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.**

#### **The school is proficient in these areas.**

The principal's self-evaluation is accurate and he has clearly identified key areas for future development. These are mainly concerned with the need to recruit and retain more high quality instructional staff and to make more systematic use of data so that it supports the progress of the students more effectively than the informal and rather inconsistent methods currently used.

The school has only been in existence for a short time and, because attainment on entry to the school is so low, it has been concentrating its attention on raising standards across the board by improving the overall quality of instruction. It has largely been successful in these efforts, even though the targets set by the Autonomous Zone have not yet been fully met.

Proficient use is made of the data provided by the autonomous zone to gauge its comparative success. However, despite significant recent improvements, achievement is still below the target level set by the zone. In the last year the school has recorded the greatest combined improvement in value added for English Language Arts and Mathematics in the zone. The Mathematics A Regents pass rate was 94%. The school is proficient in this regard.

Considerable amounts of data are collected which are used to set general targets for classes, but clearer analysis is now required of the relative performance of students by their racial and ethnic group. Greater attention should also be given to ensuring that work is always accurately matched to the individual needs of students as in many classes higher performing students are not always sufficiently challenged by the work.

The grading of the work of students is inconsistent, but in the best examples provides much valuable information about the progress they are making on a day-to-day basis. In addition the grading process gives students feed back about their work and what areas they need to improve. The quality of the grading is particularly good in English Language Arts and the constructive comments made are effective in guiding students to the next level of their work.

Much useful assessment data is also gathered in informal discussions between teachers and students and helps teachers to gain a clear picture of what each student knows and understands.

## Urban Assembly Academy of History and Citizenship for Young Men

**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.**

**The school is proficient in this area overall.**

The school is setting challenging targets for academic improvement and has generally been successful in achieving them, recording the greatest improvement of any zone school. However the targets set by the zone are yet to be met. The improvements in the overall quality of the instruction and further development of the curriculum to meet the specific needs of the students have generally worked well and as a result most pupils are now working to their potential. Expectations are variable from class to class and are well developed in English and in law. The principal is acutely aware, however, that much of the work set in most lessons is not sufficiently challenging for the higher performing students. Special education students are supported proficiently and make satisfactory progress. Most parents and students are enthused by the plans that the school has put in place to encourage improvement, but there is still a significant group of disaffected pupils that the school is still trying to reach. At the same time most staff are dedicated to improving the performance of the students, not all staff are sufficiently skilled or committed to providing the quality of education that is required if improvement is to be sustained.

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

**The school is proficient in this area.**

Attendance is analyzed regularly and the school is proficient in this respect. Attendance has risen in the last 6 months from 84% to 86.5%, despite the very disruptive impact of the transportation strike on recorded attendance during December. The school is taking steps to further improve attendance so that it is above the target figure of 90% and is now aware of the need to improve punctuality since too many students miss the beginning of the first instructional session.

Levels of motivation, which are proficient, are very variable and there is still a small group of students that are not engaged and do not either attend well or work to their potential when they are in the school. The school is working hard to break down this resistance to education by further developing its curriculum to include a wider range of activities that might interest and encourage reluctant students. The curriculum is proficient and includes 'Master Scholar' classes and courses in law and order. In addition there is a wide range of elective classes including jewellery making and drama. The course designed to prepare students for employment in the music industry has proved popular with students and the school now has plans to extend and improve its curriculum for physical education and to make better use of computers.

Staff know students very well, both in terms of their personal and academic development. The well developed relationships that exist between staff and students are greatly valued by all parties and students confidently assure visitors that they feel safe and well looked after in the school and that they could share confidences with almost all staff. Parents are delighted with the relationships that exist between staff and their sons.

The principal and the program director visit classes on a regular basis and have an accurate understanding of the strengths and relative weaknesses within the instructional

## Urban Assembly Academy of History and Citizenship for Young Men

staff. They know that although some staff are proficient and have well developed skills in certain areas, others are not good enough.

All of the decisions made within the school, including aspects of scheduling, budgeting and staff selection are driven by the need to improve the education available to the students so that the standards gained are as high as possible and plans are already in place to replace weaker teachers. The principal is aware that much of the instruction is too teacher dominated and staff need to involve students more actively in their learning so that lessons are more interesting and engage students more effectively.

The school has effective partnerships with parents, who organize a range of events that entertain the local residents and raise funds for the school. In addition the school has developed good links with a wide range of community-based organisations including Giant Thinking, Dreamyard, Mott Hall and the Autonomy Zone. These links help to enhance the curriculum and to provide meaningful opportunities for the school's young scholars to gain an understanding of college life and the world of work. Further developments are planned and the school is keen to make even stronger links with Urban Assembly so that a potential corporate partner can be identified and developed.

**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.**

**The school is proficient in this area.**

The principal and the program director have a very strong vision and provide excellent role models both to staff and to students. The principal has worked tirelessly to develop a leadership and management structure that makes best use of the staff he has at his disposal and to develop a team structure that can support the school as it continues its growth. He monitors the quality of instruction rigorously and has a well-developed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of his staff. He is currently busy interviewing and selecting new staff to fill the gaps made by outgoing staff and by the phased growth of the school. He is keen to recruit sufficient staff with the required skills to continue the improvements already made and is searching for committed professionals who will make use of the available data to set interesting work that will challenge all students at their own level. There are well developed procedures to identify the training needs of both the school and individual staff and instructional staff have regular opportunities to develop their skills by attending professional development courses, but some opportunities are missed to share best practice within the school.

The principal has high expectations of the students and insists on a strict dress code for his young male scholars, who are expected to attend school in trousers, a shirt and a tie. Most students conform to his requirements, but surprisingly the same high expectations are not made of staff members who, in many cases, are not as well dressed as the students. This is a weakness and sends conflicting messages to the students.

The school runs smoothly because the principal has a good understanding of his own personal strengths and skills and is able to motivate and relate to all the students. Agreed procedures are generally followed and the administration of the school is efficient and effective. The principal and the program director are respected and have the capacity to make any changes that are required. The school is very well supported by an experienced professional mentor, who provides them with a detailed knowledge of the New York City educational system.

## Urban Assembly Academy of History and Citizenship for Young Men

**Quality Statement 5: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

**The school is proficient in this area.**

Staff assess and monitor the progress of the students at regular periods using a range of formal and informal systems, particularly the latter and know the students well. The data gained from the careful grading of the work completed is used to variable effect to plan programs and tasks that are generally well matched to the group needs of the students, but more could be done to refine the activities to meet the needs of the highest performing students and to make learning more active. Most teachers are proficient in grading the performance of the students in their own classes, but more should be done to compare strategies and outcomes with teachers in other areas.

### **Other key observations**

The school manages the building well and is working hard to counteract the negative perceptions that many staff, parents and students have of the school because it is housed in the Taft High School building. The principal manages the accommodation well and has well developed plans to manage the schools expansion into adjacent classrooms. In addition he is looking to improve the quality of the instruction and further improve the engagement of the students by providing laboratory facilities and gaining better access to gymnastic facilities.

# Urban Assembly Academy of History and Citizenship for Young Men

## Part 4: Evaluation Criteria Grade Summary

<b>Quality Statement 1: Monitoring Performance and Progress: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data</b>	o	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own to provide an objective, constantly updated picture of how well each student, classroom, grade level, and other important categories of students and the school are: (1) currently performing, and (2) progressing over time, on English Language Arts, mathematics, and other important academic subjects		X	
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		X	
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.		X	
<b>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.</b>	O	✓	+
2.1 Using data, the school sets demanding, objectively measurable, goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and it develops 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 warranting attention.	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. 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.		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	
<b>Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	O	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with the school's high expectations and improvement plans and based on the curriculum's capacity to generate useful interim data about progress towards goals.		X	
3.2 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	
3.2 Scheduling decisions are driven by the time and resources needed to obtain and use performance and progress data, set high goals, and implement and continuously improve the school's plans for reaching stated goals.		X	
3.3 Staffing decisions are driven by the time and resources needed to obtain and use performance and progress data, set high goals, and implement and continuously improve the school's plans for reaching stated goals.		X	
3.4 Budgeting decisions are driven by the resources needed to obtain and use performance and progress data, set high goals, and implement and continuously improve the school's plans for reaching stated goals.		X	
3.5 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
3.6 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
3.7 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.8 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies exist and are routinely utilized for the purpose of achieving stated academic goals.		X	

## Urban Assembly Academy of History and Citizenship for Young Men

<b>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.</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</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.		<b>X</b>	
4.2 The leadership team is respected and has capacity to effect change.		<b>X</b>	
4.3 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and they are generally followed.		<b>X</b>	
4.4 Leaders, faculty, and staff share the same goals and frequently evaluate themselves, their interventions and each other's plans and interventions, including 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.		<b>X</b>	
4.5 Planning, evaluation of results and revision of plans takes place in teams.		<b>X</b>	
4.6 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.		<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 5: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</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 reaching stated goals.		<b>X</b>	
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.		<b>X</b>	
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.		<b>X</b>	
5.4 Each plan's final outcome, and the aggregate and comparative outcomes of similar plans, drive each successive phase of goal setting and improvement planning, including the revision of plans designed to be implemented again.		<b>X</b>	