



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Urban Assembly Institute of Math and Science for
Young Women**

**Middle School 527
960 Prospect Place
Brooklyn
NY 11213**

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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

Progress made since the last review
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 Institute of Math and Science for Young Women is a secondary school with 144 students from grade 6 to grade 7. The school population comprises 89% Black, 6% Hispanic, 1% White, 3% Asian and 1% American Indian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 0% of the students enrolled and girls account for 100%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 96%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 81% eligibility.

The school opened with 75 grade 5 students in September 2006; a further 75 students joined in September 2007 and a new grade will be added each year. When the school reaches its full capacity, it will have approximately 525 female students from grade 6 through 12. To accommodate this population the school will move premises at the end of this school year. Two co-principals lead the school jointly.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The administration has a systematic approach to collection and analysis of data and has in-depth knowledge of progress and performance across the school.
- Levels of literacy, particularly in the most vulnerable group of students, have improved because of a focused cross-curricular literacy initiative.
- All staff, including support staff, act as advisors in a very well structured system that supports all students and develops a powerful nurturing culture.
- A lively program of after-school activities develops a range of skills in students.
- An accelerated curriculum means that grade 7 students will this year sit their first Regent's examination two years ahead of the expected time.
- A well-structured approach to professional development develops teachers' confidence as well as new instructional strategies.
- The co-principals develop high levels of commitment and creativity in teachers within a very strong system of distributed leadership.
- Grade team meetings draw together advisory and other support staff in an extremely coherent approach to supporting students in difficulty.
- The co-principals have created a vision of empowerment of staff and students which they pursue with great integrity.

What the school needs to improve

- Formalize the use of action planning with interim targets, success criteria and timescales to support the school's plans for improvement as the school grows.
- Make systems to develop responsibility in learners more robust to ensure that students always know the aim of their work and their steps for improvement.
- Systematically develop practical data systems as well as practice to improve levels of differentiation in the classroom.
- Focus on the development of aspects of classroom management, particularly strategies to maximize time on task, to ensure a brisk pace of learning.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The Urban Assembly Institute of Math and Science for Young Women has a mission to empower the young women it serves, to lead them to shine in their field of study and to give exceptional preparation to take their place in university. The leaders have accelerated the curriculum to enable students to meet Regents standards earlier than is the norm. The school constantly introduces students to suitable role models and supports them to raise their aspirations through useful connections with partner organizations. A pioneering approach to leadership means that two co-principals lead the school and an innovative form of distributed leadership reflects this highly collaborative theme. Peer grade leaders are members of the cabinet and staff are fully involved in a number of developmental committees. The result is that teachers have a high degree of ownership of the work of school, are extremely committed to students and there is a real sense of excitement that they will be able to do great things as the school grows. Other staff, including clerical staff, are involved in leading advisory groups, another innovative approach which serves a dual purpose: students are well supported in small groups and all staff become explicitly drawn into the culture of support and nurture.

Since the last review, the school has continued its development of distributed leadership and has made strides in the area of improving literacy skills. Administration has employed a literacy coach and all teachers focus on developing this area. Test results show improvement. The smooth assimilation of a new grade cohort in September demonstrates the leaders' readiness for expansion. Professional development continues to be a strong feature of the school. In response to last year's review, opportunities for teacher peer observation and for working together have developed. Administration uses data very effectively and teachers are growing in awareness of the data available to them. It does not yet lead to sophisticated differentiation in all classrooms and as a result, not all students are challenged at an appropriate rate.

The co-principals are laying down solid structures, creating a powerful culture and drawing staff together behind a joint vision. They are beginning the very good development of the school. The school's embryonic nature means that the pace of development is uneven. Goals are clear but are not formally organized and systematically reviewed. Staff are committed to the Schools Attuned initiative, which gives a useful framework for analyzing lessons and students progress. Pace of learning in lessons, however, is still uneven and differentiation does not consistently drive forward learning. The attitude of the school leads staff to be curious learners and this reflects in the inquiry team which used the Schools Attuned approach to research a cohort of nine students who struggle with their work. They have turned this work to all staff to help them to understand the barriers to student learning.

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Although the school is in its infancy, the co-principals have set up efficient and practical systems to collect and analyze data. This means they base their judgments on their stringent, objective and detailed knowledge of the school. Although their cohort is small, they break down groups to check for trends and are already in a position to compare their progress to another similar school, something that is essential to support objective analysis because as a new school they are not yet brought into the system of comparison prepared by the City. The administration has focused on a number of groups, in particular those who are struggling. The inquiry team has identified this group for further study and has turn-keyed their detailed findings about learning to the whole staff. Because of careful analysis of data, literacy became a focus and this has led to a very successful intervention. Because numbers of special education students and English language learners are small, disaggregation of data does not lead to any conclusive evidence. Nevertheless, systems are already in place to enable administration to evaluate next year's introduction of collaborative team teaching.

The school plans that all staff will use the data available to them to develop expert differentiation and to increase the pace of learning for all students. There has been significant and thoughtful professional development to start this process. Administration has focused on developing reporting, raising awareness of available data and supporting staff to become comfortable with the technology. Some staff have developed at a faster rate than others. The use of Schools Attuned has led to staff analyzing evidence accrued from student performance in a detailed way. Use of data, therefore, is becoming a central plank for the preparation of lessons.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The co-principals lead from a position of strength derived from their detailed understanding of the progress of the school. Goals are set within a strong framework of collaborative structures in which grade teams play a central part. Peer leaders from each grade team are members of cabinet and give useful information based on the teachers' point of view. This leads to pragmatic goal setting. The school has focused effectively on those who struggle with their work and on the area of literacy. The school now has a literacy coach who supports staff to incorporate the English curriculum into all lessons. Students who have struggled most have a demonstrable rate of improvement.

The school has raised the bar with its decision to accelerate the curriculum. However, student goals for achievement are not yet sufficiently rigorous or consistent which means that progress is limited. There are some systems for giving students goals for improvement but students and their parents are not sufficiently familiar with these

because they are not common across all classrooms. Students therefore are not developing their understanding in a coherent system. Parents, nevertheless, are delighted with the school's work with their daughters and speak highly of the way that it involves them and communicates with them.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

There is a buzz about the school. Teachers are excited by the vision for their students and recognize that their own ideas may become policy. The work developing from training in the Schools Attuned program shows the staff at their best. They have seized this initiative, work closely together to implement it and it is the mechanism with which they plan to drive forward learning. A focus on a curriculum accelerated by two years drives achievement in the first instance. This feature of the school is extremely attractive to parents. Grade 7 students will take their first Regents exam this year and, based on pre-Regency test results, the school anticipates that the initiative will prove to be successful. The curriculum within the school day is based mainly around the four key areas of social studies science, math, and English language arts. To supplement this the school offers a wonderfully vibrant range of after school activities. This includes belly dancing and yoga, art, historic research which provides opportunity for a lot of fun and challenge. Approximately 65% of students attend and enjoy these classes. The special help program is one of the key means to offer extra support to students. To make sure that this does not seem like a punishment, the school now has study time for all students after lunch and clinics are held at this time. This supports all students and effectively captures those who might lag behind in an effective way. There are high levels of trust between staff and students. The innovative small group advisory system, involving all staff does a great deal to develop a very nurturing environment.

There are a great many innovative ideas in teaching but at present classroom management is not sound enough to ensure that students are on task all of the time. Transitions, for example, are often time consuming and group exercises do not succeed as well as they should because students do not collaborate skillfully. Differentiated practice is uneven and students therefore are not routinely challenged at an appropriate level.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is well-developed.

Teachers set and systematically review their own goals throughout the year. Professional development has several components including a system of peer observation and discussion, which targets aspects of teachers' work. Schools Attuned training has led to high quality peer led professional development. The co-principals are encouraging and thorough in their observations and teachers are keen to improve. Confidence is clearly developing and teachers take risks to find new ways to engage

students. The distributive leadership model also challenges teachers to expand their professionalism. The range of professional development does not sufficiently address issues of lesson pace and this means that the advances in teaching have not yet fully bloomed.

One of the best features of the school is its work on “Kid Talk”. This involves grade teams in regular discussion and review of students who are experience difficulty. It leads to a holistic approach to understanding learners because teachers understand how outside influences affect learning. Teachers use data in a very functional way and it ensures that no student in difficulty is left languishing. This system draws together all support personnel. The school employs a partnership co-coordinator who understands very fully the school’s missions and develops partners to support the aspirations of the students. These include both academic institutions such as the Polytechnic University, and partners who support the holistic view of development held by the school such as the Crown Heights Meditation centre. The school runs smoothly and is developing systems that will stand it in good stead as it grows.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The co-principals involve staff to a high degree in the plans for school development and the community is clear about goals for improvement. Information flows in a productive way between staff and administration with grade leaders attending cabinet meetings. The administrators keep a constant check on the school’s development against the evidence gathered from its various data sources.

Although the school is small and relationships are well developed, the principals recognize that they must attend to many aspects to ensure that growth in size does not hinder growth in achievement. They therefore have set planning systems in place. A more formalized system of action planning including time frames, success criteria and interim targets has not yet developed. This means that progress towards goals is not tightly monitored, something which increases in importance as the school grows.

The marking periods and reporting give useful interim information about students but use of this data to set goals for improvement across the board is still at the developmental stage. Students therefore are not always in charge of their own next steps.

The school has an exciting vision and innovative and creative ways of working. The co-principals pursue this vision with enthusiasm and integrity. At this point, they have laid a sturdy foundation for future growth.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: UAI of Math and Science for Young Women	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score			X		

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?			X		
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X		

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?			X		
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?			X		
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X		

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?			X		
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?			X		
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X		

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?			X		
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped