



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Academy of Urban Planning

**High School 552
400 Irving Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11237**

Principal: Monique Darrisaw

Dates of review: May 22-23, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Ronnie Young

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Academy of Urban Planning is a high school with 486 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 33.7% Black, 61.7% Hispanic, 1.5% White, 1.6% Asian students and 1.5% not reported. The student body includes 18.3% English language learners and 15.2% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 81%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 93.8% eligibility.

The building is shared with several other high schools, each with its own vocational focus of study.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- All staff members are dedicated and committed and work highly collaboratively to maximize the potential of every individual student.
- Coherent systems, structures and professional development are in place for the collection, analysis and use of data.
- Teachers are skilled at differentiating activity in the classroom so instruction meets the learning needs of all students.
- Intervisitation of classes is well established and routine, and helps to share good practice.
- Teachers are very flexible and quick to revise plans and strategies when analysis of student outcomes deems this necessary.
- Guidance counselors and related services staff work closely with teachers to improve students' academic and personal growth.
- Whole school plans are clear, measurable and time limited with incrementalized action plans.
- Leaders differentiate professional development to allow teachers to train at their individual levels of ability and need.
- Effective systems are in place for the identification and improvement of students or groups of students who are a focus area.

What the school needs to improve

- Explore partnerships with more community based and outside organizations to extend opportunities for students.
- Ensure that all goals for student and teacher outcomes have interim checkpoints and are time limited and measurable.
- Explore procedures to encourage better student attendance.
- Help staff to find consistent ways of working with students in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.
- Break down disaggregation of ethnicity data by cultural groups to identify possible trends and target strategies for improvement.
- Clarify and reestablish the school vision so it becomes the uniting and driving force for change across the whole school community.

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 Academy of Urban Planning has worked extremely hard during the last year to remedy the deficiencies reported in the previous review. The principal's inspirational leadership, combined with her and the administration's hard work, has led to a school with effective systems in place for improving the performance of every individual student. The school can now ascertain each student's achievement profile and work out his or her needs. All the school staff members are totally committed to their students. They work closely together and are eager to build on these changes to improve students' performance. However, because this has happened only in the past year, it is too early to see real impact on achievement.

The school provides a unique and exciting curriculum that manages to combine core subjects with electives that make them relevant to real life. Art and sports are fully included. The guidance counselors work in total conjunction with teachers to support every aspect of the student's time in the school. Staff collaboration is a strong feature of the school and intervisitation, common daily preparation times and rigorous professional development ensure teachers feel as supported as the students. Teachers say they feel empowered and there is vibrancy about the school that exudes optimism.

The school has still some work to do, however. Attendance is relatively low, despite the school's best efforts, and there is some mistrust of staff by students. Although the school uses data on individual students consistently, leaders do not utilize effectively enough information about subgroups to identify trends. The school does not make sufficient use of community based organizations that could extend opportunities for students, especially as they are so knowledgeable about their neighborhoods. Finally, the school's vision, although clear to the administration, does not yet unite the school community and form the driving force for change.

The inquiry team works well. The team is currently tracking a group of grade 9 holdover students to negate their disaffection with school. Since the last quality review, the school has addressed all the recommendations: goal setting and monitoring systems are in place and each teacher has an assessment binder. The implementation of individual student binders is underway. Teachers are more accountable, with differentiation becoming the norm in classrooms. Finally, more challenging targets have been set for the school; the graduation target is now 75%, up 20% from last year. The school is currently on track to achieve that, with a margin of error of 2%.

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.

The school has put an enormous amount of work into setting up robust systems, structures and professional development for collecting, analyzing and using data on all students. As one teacher said, "Our students make fun of us for how much we know about them, even if we don't teach those students personally." As well as information from formal sources, such as New York State results, Acuity and Scantron, the school uses a computerized program called "Teacher Ease" which records the scores of all quizzes and assignments and includes item analysis. In this way, staff can easily identify the needs of all students and can accurately gauge the levels of their skills. This information is accessible by parents and students to facilitate home support. The school appointed a diligent new assistant principal this year as the school's data manager, responsible for distributing data and training staff in its use. This has led to much improved consistency and clear professional development in data management.

Each teacher has a binder with full information about every student they teach and this information follows them through school in newly introduced student binders. These help teachers to track students at each six-weekly marking period, individually, by class, teacher, subject and cohort. The school always compares itself with other schools, including their neighbors in the building, other neighborhood schools and those in their peer group. Comparisons include performance and progress and the comparisons help to identify good practice and share funding and curriculum initiatives, especially with the schools who share the building.

Although the school has excellent knowledge of individuals, classes and grades, it does not use breakdowns of subgroups efficiently. For example, although leaders track students by ethnicity, they do not break the ethnicities down into discrete ethnic cultures, even though staff members have found, for example, that Hispanic students from different countries have different attendance patterns. This has led to missed opportunities for identifying significant trends and patterns.

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 well developed.

Staff members work extremely collaboratively to help students to progress. As one teacher said, "We are obsessively collaborative". Staff have a common preparation period daily which enables them to hold a weekly meeting for each grade and one for each department. At an eleventh grade meeting, staff examined credit accumulation data for the whole grade and identified a group of students who were just below minimum achievement levels. Together, they designed plans for the students to achieve the missing credits. As the eleventh grade guidance counselor was present, he helped staff to work out goals for the students that he will relay at the next individual advisory

meetings. Staff say the grade meetings have helped to address weaknesses in students' achievement quickly.

The school is practiced at tracking groups to focus on. The inquiry team has chosen a group of grade 9 students who are held over and is examining every aspect of their lives, including home and previous school experiences, to find a way of making them more positive about school. This activity has helped the school to look at the whole child and not just academic performance when working out who is to benefit from the extensive range of academic intervention services. The school tries to work in partnership with parents whenever possible and the introduction of Teacher Ease has facilitated this as parents are able to access their children's' goals and progress at all times. However, a number of parents have little involvement in their children's education, which the school is trying to address.

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.

The school has invested a great deal of time and resources in introducing differentiation into classrooms, which has proved to be successful. Staff use a variety of ways of differentiating instruction. For example, in a grade 12 math class, students were working on a statistics assignment, using actual school data. Teachers divided the class into three, based on ability, and gave each group a task commensurate with their level of expertise. Students then pooled their results. This enabled the class to work effectively as a team. In a grade 10 social studies class, groups worked in threes based on learning styles so each student could work to their strengths.

The school's curriculum is unique in New York City. Under the theme of urban planning, students are able to study exciting electives such as geographical information systems, graphic design and sociology. Students are very knowledgeable about their own neighborhoods as a result and this has made them socially and politically aware. Sport and the arts are accessible both during and after the school day.

Although the school has made great efforts to increase attendance, it is still comparatively low, mainly due to reasons unconnected with the school. The school recognizes this as a major priority area. The school has also recognized that some students have issues of trust with their teachers. Although students respect them, they speak of some inconsistencies in the implementation of rules by some staff, and they feel some teachers and security officers do not fully trust them. This has led to a small minority of students becoming disaffected.

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.

Intervisitation of classes has been instrumental in helping staff to work together closely. Systems are routine and well established, and used to spread good practice to facilitate

cross-curricular themes and allow staff to track certain students more closely. Guidance counselors work very closely with teachers. They are at every grade and department meeting; they conduct advisories, facilitate study skills and help students to set goals. They also run a number of clubs that promote academic success, such as the book club, the debating society and the nutrition club that also supports students' life styles.

The administration conducts frequent teaching observations and walkthroughs, always with constructive feedback, that form the basis for differentiated professional development. This, combined with a staff needs analysis at the beginning of the year and close monitoring of data to ascertain students' needs, ensures staff are able to train at the right level for their abilities, experience and needs. Professional development is taken very seriously in the school and the generous common preparation time allows for a great deal of peer support. This is especially true for new teachers, who emphasize the large amount of help and care they receive from the school.

Although the school has partnerships with a few outside organizations, most notably its lead partner the Center for Urban Environment, it has made few connections with community-based organizations. This has meant students have been unable to capitalize fully on the wealth of community knowledge gained through the school's unique program of electives.

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 school's goal setting is becoming ever more sophisticated and whole school goals, which are clearly displayed on every corridor in the school, are measurable and time limited. They are the cornerstone of all activity in the school and action planning for them is included in all meetings. However, the school vision is not so clear. The principal is very certain where she wants the school to go ultimately, but she has not conveyed clearly to other stakeholders just how she expects to get there.

Other goals in the school are less structured. Even though they have all been carefully worked out with teachers, some goals for students are long-term and do not contain measurable, time-limited increments that would help students to achieve them more easily. Some specific goals for teachers are similarly long-term and unstructured, so are difficult to monitor.

Staff are becoming more practiced at using diagnostic tools and assessments, such as micro-quizzes, to measure student progress. This has completely changed their way of working. One teacher said, "We can now build skills profiles and design lesson plans around the students". The depth of knowledge they have about their students has led to greater flexibility in staff, regarding instruction and support. They are quick to revise plans and strategies when necessary and changes to planned lessons have now become the norm. This has resulted in lessons becoming more student-centered.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Academy of Urban Planning	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