



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Urban Assembly School of Design and
Construction**

**High School 300
525 West 50th Street
New York
NY 10019**

Principal: Lawrence Pendergast

Dates of review: March 4 - 5, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Ken Bryan

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Urban Assembly School of Design and Construction is a high school with 378 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 26% Black, 61% Hispanic, 4% White, and 5% Asian students with the remainder from other ethnic groups. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 80% of the students enrolled and girls account for 20%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 86.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 84% eligibility.

The school is housed on the fourth floor of a building it shares with five other schools. The school shares the use of some facilities such as the gymnasium and the cafeteria. The school is a college preparatory school that has an architecture and engineering theme. Approximately 30% of the intake participates in the themed programs. The school was established in 2004 and 2008 marks the first four-year graduation year for the senior grade students.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school principal provides very good operational and academic leadership.
- The school effectively provides academic and personal guidance for all its students to promote their academic and social development.
- Students behave well and have developed excellent relationships with one-another and with the staff.
- The school places a strong emphasis on the programs in visual and performing arts which its students pursue both in school and through productive extra-curricular partnerships
- The overall quality of the teaching is good and most students make good progress as a result.
- The level of commitment of the teachers is high and there is a strong sense of collaboration, collegiality and peer support.
- Professional development is based on data analysis and differentiated to meet the needs of all staff.
- Positive relationships with community-based organizations and other partners enhance students' academic, vocational and personal development
- Procedures are followed routinely and the climate within this small, well-ordered community is conducive to learning.
- The school has a strong partnership with parents who receive frequently up-dated information about their child's personal and academic progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Seek ways to involve senior staff more in the strategic leadership of the school.
- Increase the rigor with which the school monitors and evaluates its effectiveness to include departmental action plans with measurable goals, success criteria and timeframes.
- Enable teachers to differentiate instruction to take account of the range of achievement and learning styles in heterogeneous settings.
- Utilize data more strategically and systematically to determine how well the school is doing and to demonstrate graphically its strengths and areas for improvement.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

As the Urban Assembly School of Design and Construction nears the end of its first four-year graduation period, it can be proud of its accomplishments. Most students make good progress as result of the strong leadership provided by its dynamic principal, the excellent relationships which have developed between teachers and students within its small learning community and due to the overall quality of the instruction. The principal is supported well by his grade and departmental leaders. The school runs very smoothly, there is a tangible positive tone in the building and procedures are routinely followed. The students receive very effective personal and academic guidance within their advisory teams, and due to the small size of the school, the teachers have a clear understanding of the needs of every student. In addition, the teachers are given good support through the differentiated provision of professional development. The degree of collaboration amongst the staff is another key element in the school's success. The school has also developed many useful links with outside community-based organizations and other agencies who support the architectural and construction themes as well as the academic and elective programs. This support actively enhances and enriches the personal and academic development of the students. In addition, the school successfully provides parents and caregivers with frequently up-dated information about the personal and academic progress of each student and it has developed very good home-school relationships.

It is now imperative to consolidate the school's achievements through the hiring of an assistant principal at the earliest opportunity. The school requires another supervisor to ensure robust accountability and consistency across departments and grades. In addition, the assistant principal has a central role to play in the strategic management of data. An inquiry team has been established but, to date, with little effect.

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 gathers and analyzes data effectively and has a good understanding of the performance and progress of each student. Internally generated data provides the school with a clear understanding of pass rates in the mock Regents and Regents exams. In addition, the teachers collate the results from class-based formative,

diagnostic and summative assessments. The principal, with the assistance of the data manager and the grade and departmental leaders, is engaging other commercial systems to provide interim assessments. He is also seeking to develop a school-wide skills tracking system to monitor the performance of each student in greater depth. The achievement and progress of special education students with individual education plans are tracked through robust systems. The relative progress of the small English language learner population is carefully monitored. The school also monitors the progress of the various sub-groups based upon ethnicity and gender. The school can demonstrate that most students make good progress in relation to credit accumulation and Regents pass rates and this reflected in the school's favorable position within the school's peer horizon.

The principal and his administration systematically and frequently compares the school's performance with similar and peer horizon schools. The school methodically checks the school's current performance against previous years' data to determine trends. Grade and departmental teams are beginning to analyze rigorously each cohort's performance as it transfers through the school. Faculty and administration are developing their confidence and competence in using data. The appointment of a data manager has strengthened the school's ability to collate and analyze data.

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.

All stakeholders participate in a collaborate process to set school-wide goals but these do not translate into departmental action plans with measurable and time related goals. The Comprehensive Education Plan is reviewed each month by the school Leadership team drawing on available data. Individual learning goals for students' achievement and progress are created by the teachers and shared through one-to-one conferences. Students are assigned to advisory staff who provide individual support and guidance. Their targets for improvement are both measurable and realistic and include success criteria and timeframes.

Students at risk of failing are quickly identified and interventions are established through grade and departmental consultation meetings. Students are assigned to homework centers, peer tutoring sessions and Saturday prep for remediation, and the guidance counselor provides academic intervention services support. Goals are also set for in and out of school suspensions and attendance. As a result, student attendance is rising and suspension rates are falling.

All members of the school community are focused upon improving the performance and progress of the students. The school is signaling its high expectations by encouraging enrollment on Advanced Placement courses. High expectations are shared with parents and caregivers through the use of newsletters, conferences, academic reports and through day-to-day contacts. Information pertaining to the academic performance of each student is shared with the home. The school has an open door policy whereby parents have access to all staff in order to receive and give information.

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 successfully plans a broad and balanced curriculum which includes the mandated core subjects and electives. These include music, Spanish and the themes associated with architectural design and structural engineering. The curriculum is enhanced by a number of extra-curricular activities many of which focus on the arts. The core curriculum is aligned to State standards and adequately prepares the students for Regents. Teachers are held accountable to provide well-planned and engaging classes, which motivate the students. In general, classroom instructional routines are followed by most teachers, which include the use of explicit aims, the setting of homework, the use of end of session consolidation and the adherence to an established lesson model. Where teachers use technology, provide opportunities for hands-on enquiry, classes are motivating and engaging. Students speak positively about the relationships they have with the teachers.

The school's climate is safe and conducive to learning and students behave well and exhibit positive attitudes to learning. Teachers use formal and informal data to differentiate instruction. However, teachers use the data predominantly to group the students according to levels of achievement. In heterogeneous settings, there is a lack of differentiation for many students, such as modifications of resources, the use of visuals and graphic organizers, the use of technology or the tailoring of vocabulary. The principal has been imaginative in the use of the school's budget to meet the needs of target populations. For grade 9 students working below grade level, class sizes have been reduced. As a consequence, many are on track to graduate with a local diploma. All members of the learning community have built very positive relationships. There are high levels of mutual trust and support within the student and staff constituent groups.

The school's strategies for challenging student absence and tardiness are robust and embedded. In addition, good attendance is celebrated through the use of prizes, certificates and other events. Even though attendance rates are considerably higher than other high schools, the school recognizes the need to continue to raise levels further.

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 proficient.

The principal regularly observes every teacher and provides constructive feedback. Without an assistant principal, the supervisory role of the principal is constantly in demand. Through the systematic analysis of the scholarship reports and other data, the school identifies differentiated professional development opportunities for staff. In addition, professional development and monitoring follows departmental lines and does not secure a consistent approach or lead to an overarching picture. Consequently, key members of staff require further training and professional development. However, distributive leadership has the potential to drive school improvement. The principal

clearly understands the strengths and weaknesses of each member of the staff and addresses key deficiencies through the expeditious use of in-house and externally-sourced professional development. There are frequent opportunities for teachers to visit other classrooms and an open-door approach to intervisitations is making an impact. This has resulted in greater consistency as teachers are able to share best practices and resources. Increasingly, the teachers are becoming reflective as they hone their pedagogic craft. In addition, the teachers have carefully selected goals from the Professional Teaching Standard, which in turn has ensured greater consistency.

Teachers are proactive in providing students with academic and personal guidance. College readiness is a key aim and the teachers carefully use C-PAS college readiness performance assessments to support students' transition to college. Students are well supported by advisory staff and guidance counselors and preparation for college is both thorough and individualized. Excellent partnerships exist with community-based organizations to enhance the personal and academic development of the students. These include the office of New York City's Council Speaker Quinn, who has responded with funds for laptop carts and renovations, the Center for Architecture Foundation which provides scholarships and The College Board which has granted funds for the establishment of advanced placement programs.

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 principal ensures that planning is an integral part of the school self-review process. The Comprehensive Education Plan includes clear goals, which are both measurable and realistic. Frequent adjustments are made based upon available data and the school leadership team meets monthly to review progress towards meeting student, cohort and departmental goals. Grade and departmental teams meet weekly to evaluate school-wide data and there is a developing strategy to use periodic, interim assessments to track the relative effectiveness of interventions, programs and initiatives. As a result analyses of current formal and informal data results in timely modifications and revisions to the school's goals. Good examples of this flexibility are the decisions to schedule the earth science and English Regents exams in accordance with other Regents results.

The school benefits from its small student population. Individual student learning goals are carefully monitored. The effectiveness of student-focused interventions is carefully evaluated and there is a clear understanding of the next stage of the goal setting process. Departmental, grade and cohort goal setting is part of a school-wide cycle, involving all stakeholders. The principal, his staff and the wider school community have a clear understanding of the school's overall aims and vision. These are revisited continuously during school leadership team, grade and departmental meetings and invariably, student performance and progress data lies at the heart subsequent discussions. However, the administration is not fully strategic or systematic in its use of data to determine just how well the school is doing and to demonstrate graphically its strengths and areas for improvement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Urban Assembly School of Design and Construction	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 demanding, 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?				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?				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