



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Urban Assembly School of Business for  
Young Women**

**High School 316  
420 East 12 Street  
New York  
NY 10009**

**Principal: Patricia Minaya**

**Dates of review: March 6 - 7, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Ann Berger**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Urban Assembly School of Business for Young Women is a high school with 293 students from grade 9 through grade 11. The school population comprises 54.6% Black, 14.7% Hispanic, 3% White, and 20.4% Asian students. Just over 7% of students are from other ethnic backgrounds. The student body includes 6.8% English language learners and 14 % 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 86.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 60% eligibility.

The school opened in 2006 and is housed in temporary accommodation designed originally for special education students. Half the classrooms are suitable for 10 to 15 students and half are full sized. The school was due to move into new premises in September 2008 but this has been deferred at least for a further year. No plans have yet been agreed for accommodating the next grade of students arriving this September. Eight teachers are new to teaching this year and nearly all the remaining eight teachers are in their second year of teaching. This school was not the first choice of most of the students currently attending.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school is overcoming many challenges and keeping the interests of its students at the heart of its decisions.
- Careful comparisons are made with other schools to ensure high aspirations are maintained.
- The coaching and mentoring supports new teachers' instruction well.
- Data is carefully analyzed to identify strengths and weaknesses in the performance of students and teachers.
- The business mentoring and internships are motivating for students and provide excellent role models.
- The wide range of partnerships enhances learning well.
- The guidance and advisory programs are effective in improving learning.
- The school is a safe, orderly and caring community and the students value this highly.
- Special education students receive good support and achieve better than expected outcomes.
- Plans are regularly revised in the light of evidence and new goals determined.

### What the school needs to improve

- Provide more systematic opportunities for teachers to learn from skilled and experienced teachers through more frequent intervisitations.
- Increase the senior management capacity of the school.
- Collate information more systematically to better inform and measure the success of strategic planning and management decisions.
- Find more ways to encourage parent participation in the life of the school and their own child's learning.

## 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.**

The principal has worked tirelessly to establish proficient arrangements in a short time to ensure that students achieve the school's goals of attending college and becoming familiar with the world of business. Despite this the annual delays in finding suitable accommodation is a constant challenge and the overcrowding has a negative impact on the students' progress particularly when large classes are squeezed into small rooms.

New teachers are supported well and helped to develop their instructional skills. The focused and systematic coaching has had a positive impact but the lack of expert teachers within the school has limited the opportunities for sharing experience and related professional development. Intervisitations are not systematically planned and are also available too infrequently. Despite this the staff members collaborate and communicate well and learn from each other as best they can.

The curriculum is designed to achieve the expressed goals and is effective. The addition of Regent prep classes within the school day is highly valued by students and parents. There is a reasonable range of other opportunities available including trips to visit colleges and businesses that the students speak of favourably.

The lack of an Assistant Principal has limited the capacity of the school to establish effective management systems and procedures in some areas. The advisory systems are good and the school knows what each individual student needs to work on next. However this information is not fully analyzed in a way that can systematically inform management decisions.

Attendance and lateness remains an issue for too many students. The school has set goals to address this. The school is running a trial of "Teacherease" which is proving effective in helping parents support their daughters' learning. However the participation of parents in the life of the school is not sufficiently extensive and parents report that they are not always aware of how well their daughters are doing.

The school has focused its inquiry team on learning about students who have limited literacy skills. A good start has been made to analyze information about their strengths and areas for development. However the team has further work to do to fully understand the differences in performance between those doing well and those who are not, in order to plan the most effective strategies and address students' needs fully.

## **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 past year has seen improvements in the school's approach to the analysis and use of data. The principal and staff now have information to hand that presents an accurate and up to date picture of the progress of each individual student. This is used to measure their performance over time. The data is disaggregated by ethnicity but there is too little analysis of why there are differences in the performance of different groups in certain subjects and classes. As a result planned interventions cannot be reliably focused on the problems.

Knowledge of individual students and their backgrounds is developing well. This supports many of the decisions taken about strategies to work with specific students. The use of Aquty is enabling a much clearer picture of where gaps lie in student learning. There are very few English language learners and their progress is monitored carefully. However the lack of a specialist teacher to provide expert advice limits the strategies the school can adopt to ensure they do as well as they could for these students.

There have been good training opportunities offered to teachers to ensure they understand more about the analysis of data. A particularly useful data inventory has helped teachers understand the full range of information available to them.

**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 goal setting processes are broadly effective. The school leadership team supports the principal in this regard and everyone knows the main areas for focus this year.

All students are also involved in setting their own goals and reviewing their progress in achieving them within individually agreed timescales through their regular advisory sessions. Each teacher maintains an intervention binder where the goals resulting from each session are recorded and these are monitored frequently. In addition five teachers are piloting a computerized system to inform students about how well they are doing and what is needed to improve. Parents who knew about this found it particularly helpful as they were able to ensure their child completed homework and could follow up any lateness or absence. Unfortunately the school relied on students to inform parents of the system and the communication system broke down in some instances.

The goals for each lesson were described for students although they were not sufficiently specific in some classes. Special education students had clear goals set in their individual education plans and their progress against them was monitored carefully. Although teachers are using the New York standards as a basis for establishing goals many are still learning about what these standards mean in detail. It is therefore not always clear whether expectations are as high as they might be in each subject. The "college now" program suitably supports expectations that students will achieve and this is reinforced well by the school. Communication with parents is not sufficiently detailed to ensure they all understand the high expectations the school has of their children. Attendance at

parents association meetings is low although they do attend individual conferences about their own children.

**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 curriculum is adequately matched to the needs of the students. Although many students have been placed at the school and had little previous interest in the school’s specialist area of business, most have developed an interest through the good opportunities provided and in fact enjoy this aspect of their studies and are motivated by the mentoring and business internships.

The curriculum however is seriously limited by the paucity of suitable accommodation. Additional programs cannot be housed, lunch is taken at 10am as the canteen is unavailable at any other time and grade 11 students are taught in an isolated wing where teachers do not receive the support they need. There are limited science, computer and technology facilities and movement within the school requires staff and students to walk through lessons for students from another establishment. The students are crammed into rooms suitable for half their number and it is very difficult to undertake group work under these circumstances. Nevertheless the teachers make every effort to ensure lessons are interesting as seen in a global history lesson where students presented work through creatively using multimedia techniques they had developed themselves.

Some very good staffing decisions have been made to appoint some key staff. In particular the appointment of a Dean has improved the students’ behavior and attitude and there is now a positive climate of mutual respect. Attendance remains an issue although a start has been made to improve the current rates which the school believes can be improved upon. The lack of an assistant principal limits the work that can be done in relation to setting up management systems to ensure all the schools goals are met.

**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.**

Teacher observation is regular and systematic by the principal and clear goals are set as a result. The coaches also undertake frequent observations and provide systematic support. The mentoring program is carefully thought through and based on a systematic approach to improving teaching skills. The teachers have embedded much of this practice and there is a firm foundation on which to continue to build. All the teachers are at the start of their professional career and although they collaborate well together they are denied the opportunities to learn from more experienced colleagues in this or in other schools. Intervisitations are carried out but this is not a systematic programme based on the goals set.

Matters have been further confused by the introduction of network requirements to teach cross-curricular competencies before teachers are confident in teaching the basic curriculum required for passing the Regents examinations.

The guidance and youth support systems have been developed effectively and students receive good support to make decisions about their future. Partnerships have been established all over the city to provide unique opportunities for students. Through these partnerships the school is meeting its aim of exposing students to real-world experiences. They commented on the benefits of the job shadowing and power-lunch programs as well as the opportunities they have gained from feeling part of the work force. As one student commented, "You get to see how it really is at work. It gives you something to work towards".

**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's clear vision, determination and commitment have ensured a good start has been made to establishing a new school despite some significant challenges. The schools plans for improving student outcomes have objectively measurable goals and suitable time frames for measuring success. The data generated about the students' performance is considered regularly and plans are adapted but it is not always drawn together systematically to inform strategic planning.

Every teacher has an assessment binder that they use to evaluate students' progress and identify areas that require further development. Kid talk sessions are a formal process designed to ensure no student fails. Conferences are held every three weeks for the students in the lowest third of their grade. There are some opportunities to adapt the plans as well as to provide additional interventions although the relatively small staff team restricted accommodation limits this.

The information about students' progress from conferences and discussions are not fully pulled together to inform strategic planning as there is a limited amount of time that the principal can give to this and there is no one to whom such work can be delegated. Formal leadership roles are concentrated in very few staff that have the capacity to take on additional responsibilities.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME:</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
<b>The Urban Assembly School of Business for Young Women</b>					
<b>Quality Score</b>			X		
<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .</b>	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			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			X		

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .</b>	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			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			X		

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	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			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X		

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X		

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X		

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>