



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Urban Assembly School for the Performing Arts

High School 369

**509 W. 129th Street
New York
NY 10027**

Principal: Fia Davis

Dates of review: March 13 - 14, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Shehz Ali

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Urban Assembly School for the Performing Arts (UASPA) is a high school with 145 students from grade 9 through 10. The school population comprises 53% Black, 39% Hispanic, and 7% students from other ethnic groups. The student body includes 1.3% English language learners and 6.2% special education students. Boys account for 15% of the students enrolled and girls account for 85%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 84.7%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 68% eligibility.

UASPA is in its second year of operation with its founding principal. It is housed on one and a half floors of a building that accommodates four other schools. The five principals sit on a principals' council to ensure the facility is well organized and orderly. The school has recently moved to this facility from Brooklyn. The building does not have specific facilities for the performing arts. As the school grows, it will begin to take additional classrooms throughout the building.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's strong leadership and clear vision are moving the school in a positive direction.
- The staff collects and maintains significant data on every student and utilizes data to track progress and performance.
- The administration and faculty have been successful in expressing high expectations for student outcomes.
- The curriculum is broad and engaging with arts infused throughout all classes.
- Strong relationships, along with advisory classes, create a safe, secure environment where students are confident to explore and discover their skills and abilities.
- Students behave well and demonstrate the school's core values.
- Partnerships support the school's work well and provide valuable real world opportunities for students.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the focus of professional development on enabling teachers to differentiate instruction within the classroom.
- Ensure the principal's knowledge and use of school data and the articulation of goals are communicated to all stakeholders.
- Further analyze data to determine, monitor and compare the progress of additional subgroups throughout the school population.
- Ensure that consistent and effective procedures are in place for monitoring and measuring the impact of programs, plans and interventions on students' learning as the school grows.

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 School for the Performing Arts is a well run school with a dedicated staff, strong principal and a dynamic, arts-infused program. The use of data is central to decision making as teachers and staff continue to discover ways to ensure data is well analyzed and disaggregated in all areas. The principal and some teachers' detailed knowledge and understanding of specific data are impressive. Individual ownership of results is a key goal throughout the school where teachers update and distribute data bi-weekly to monitor individual and school-wide goals.

Professional development is focused on school-wide needs but does not focus enough on individual teacher practice and skills. Plans are implemented well and embedded in various areas but do not contain sufficient proactive measurable benchmarks to determine ongoing success. Strong relationships throughout the school contribute well to the sense of community and family. As a result, students, teachers and parents celebrate the school's impact on their learning. In addition, the curriculum is strong, well integrated and mostly theme-based to promote rigorous discussions, varied lessons, and relevant learning exists regularly. The school has many good partnerships that further the relevant, hands-on and practical components of the lessons.

Since the last quality review, the school has made good progress. Data is collected through improved data systems, more school plans contain measurable, specific and time related features to determine success and student behavior continues to improve. The inquiry team has made a satisfactory start in working with its identified student population.

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 collects and maintains a wealth of data on individual students. Through bi-weekly updates on TeacherEase, all students receive updates on their progress very regularly. Along with advisors, students are able to analyze quantitative grading data as well as qualitative attendance and anecdotal data from all teachers on print outs provided to each student. This ensures that the school maintains a constantly updated

understanding of each student. While teachers are able to analyze and discuss individual and classroom data, they are not all confident in analyzing data to discover additional trends, patterns among subgroups within their data. Additionally, the school does not adequately pull out special education data to determine relative progress compared to general education students. The school has analyzed data relating to gender and identified various subgroups of boys that are performing at different rates and in different areas. However, the school is still developing specific intervention plans to meet these needs.

In its second year, the school makes useful comparisons with the previous year's data. As a result, the school recognizes distinct patterns in grade levels and changes to programming as the school grows. For example 9th graders have significantly lower attendance but higher academic entry level than 10th graders. The school also compares itself well with similar schools in its Urban Assembly network. The principal is well aware of progress, evaluations and programs offered by these other schools and maintains constant contact with those most similar and beneficial to UASPA.

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.

School-wide and student specific goals are created and implemented well in most areas throughout the school. The school's primary goal of academic success through ownership and responsibility in a strong community is demonstrated clearly throughout the school. While all staff could not articulate specific school goals and plans, the staff is strongly united and work together effectively for the school's success.

Advisors post TeacherEase bi-weekly reports in advisory rooms and regularly sit with individual students to review student specific data and determine measurable goals and specific action plans which students can articulate. Advisory class goals and plans are clear to most students as data is public and accessible and goals and action plans are made as a community. The school's close-knit community fosters an environment where students ask each other for help.

Students in greatest need of improvement are effectively targeted in various ways throughout the school. The inquiry team's plan to support students in science and health classes has resulted in specifically designed, literacy based curricula and professional development to ensure achievement and progress in science matches that of other classes. The school has also recognized a small group of boys whose social struggles have adversely affected their achievement. Student intervention programs further support targeted groups and individuals with specific supports in reading, math and life skills. While plans are implemented well, there is little objective measurement to determine the success of specific interventions.

The school's high expectations are conveyed to all stakeholders. While students can pass classes if they earn a grade of 65%, the culture of high expectations ensures that students believe that a grade of 70% on class assessments is the minimum acceptable level. Parents appreciate and celebrate the high expectations evident in the school and readily compare the school's performance, behavior and philosophy to other schools in

the building and in the area. TeacherEase data is readily available to all parents so they can monitor the progress of their children. Parents become clear about the school's expectations during a detailed orientation process upon induction into the school. The principal's proactive induction process ensures students and parents are effectively, "UASPA-arized" before school begins. During the school year, parents are adequately informed about school events, progress and direction. However, parents are unable to articulate specific school goals and plans well enough.

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's curriculum integrates well with the performing arts and is in line with the school's central purpose. The core content work within most classes is contained in focused, theme-based packets of notes and worksheets. Teachers are held accountable for student progress and are expected to integrate skits, debates, art projects, dance study and hands-on activities within core content areas. For example, during the review, a teacher chose to dress in full Louis XIV regalia for a rigorous discussion regarding spectacle in the monarchy. In addition, students may major in instrumental music, vocal music, dance, drama and art. As a result of the dynamic and varied curriculum, students indicate their increased desire to come to school and stay in school.

Students and staff get along very well throughout the school. Tenth grade students explicitly detail their pleasure at the unified community after initial concern about new 9th graders. Advisory classes ensure deeper relationships form with small groups where data is analyzed and delicate social issues are discussed. Students are confident in asking questions and are equally comfortable in making mistakes in order to learn. The principal is well respected while maintaining close relationships with students. For example, her open door policy often results in early morning, informal, breakfast meetings with students who choose to drop in.

Data, and specifically mock Regents exams, informs instruction in the classroom. However, instruction is not effectively differentiated for the needs of students within a class. While the infusion of arts effectively serves some learning styles and differing modalities of learning, all students still do the same work with little additional differentiation of levels.

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.

Within this small school, most teachers wear many hats and are responsible for various aspects of the school's progress and development. The principal has effectively distributed her leadership to many staff members who are excited about leading and developing programs and initiatives for a quickly growing school. This distributed leadership model has resulted in a deep sense of ownership among staff for the success

of the curriculum and continued success and progress of students. Teachers' skills and areas of interest help to determine job descriptions and areas of focus. For example, data savvy math teachers help colleagues to correlate test questions with skills banks, in order to deepen the level of analysis of test data and are given the task of determining next steps to extend the value of TeacherEase data.

Professional development sessions focus on school-wide goals and plans, but do not effectively focus on improving teacher practice enough. The principal recognizes that with a high population of newer teachers, training must focus more on the teachers' craft. Professional development has successfully created a consistency and community among all staff and developed a common purpose throughout the school. To ensure added consistency and internalization, teachers begin school a week early for intensive professional development that enables staff to start the year on the same page.

Effective partnerships with outside organizations ensure students experience real world, relevant links to the art community in New York. Partnerships with Aaron Davis Hall/Harlem Stage, The City College of New York, Dance Theatre of Harlem, The Apollo Theatre, The Jazz Museum of Harlem and HBO all provide valuable workshops, guest speakers, internships and discussions that help students consider future careers and educational pathways. Many partnerships provide additional, performing arts resources needed for a more effective, rigorous program. The school is in the midst of plans to form an Advisory Board to better manage partnerships and resources in the near future.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features..

The strong leadership, detailed knowledge of data and relentless pursuit of excellence demonstrated by the principal continues the positive direction of the school. Staff and students recognize her high expectations and work hard to meet and exceed them. Her enthusiasm and belief in the educational program and in her students has successfully been internalized by many individuals at the Urban Assembly School for the Performing Arts.

The school implements and monitors school-wide goals and plans throughout the year. Academic ownership and responsibility are embedded in various programs and policies throughout the school and actions are measurable in a number of adequate ways. However, the school does not effectively establish measureable goals when plans are developed and does not set measurable interim goals and benchmarks throughout the year to establish whether plans successfully achieve desired outcomes.

While the principal and teachers can anecdotally discuss the progress toward desired goals, not enough is formally determined, disaggregated and measured. The school does not effectively measure the impact of specific programs, plans and interventions to measure and compare the relative success of each. The principal and some teachers recognize that as the school grows by one third next year and by one quarter the year following, structures, goals and disaggregation of subgroups must be formally determined in order to maintain long term sustainability and success.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Urban Assembly School for the Performing Arts	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