



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Urban Assembly School for Careers in Sports**

**High School 548**

**701 St. Ann's Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10455**

**Principal: Felice Lepore**

**Dates of review: March 4 - 5, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Mick Megee**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Urban Assembly School for Careers in Sports is a high school with 314 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 30% Black, 68% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 83% of the students enrolled and girls account for 17%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 87.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 71% eligibility.

The school shares a building with two other high schools, but expects to move to its own new site in the fall of 2010. Boys outnumber girls by four to one.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal manages the school very well and the entire school community is committed to his vision.
- The climate for learning is very positive and students behave well.
- The school has a strong focus on the academic and social development of each individual student.
- Staff provide very good support for individual students who are finding learning difficult, for special education students and for English language learners.
- The school provides an exciting curriculum and teaches it effectively.
- The administration gives constructive feedback to teachers on their performance, which helps them to improve their instruction continually.
- The administration gives strong support for those teachers who are new to the profession.
- The partnership with parents is positive, sensitive and productive.

### What the school needs to improve

- Make effective use of information on the progress of different groups of students when planning instruction and professional development.
- Set final and interim goals for all the constituent groups within the school, which have specific success criteria, and monitor them regularly.
- Ensure that all teachers have the opportunity to share good practice by visiting each other's lessons.

## 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.**

This school is intensely focused on making sure that each individual student is given the education he or she needs to achieve their potential. This focus has resulted in good achievement for many students, particularly those, such as special educational students, who require personal and academic support. The school runs very smoothly under the leadership of the principal. Everyone involved with the school recognizes his vision and example. Parents are very proud that their children do well, and feel that the school works well with them in partnership to set high expectations and give them good information on their children's progress. The school has cultivated strong links with external bodies such as the Yankees for the benefit of the students. It also provides very effective support for teachers who are new to the profession but there are limited opportunities for experienced teachers to observe each other's lessons.

Since the last Quality Review, two years ago as part of the Initial Pilot Program the school has reviewed its curriculum, and it is now setting individual goals for students based on its information. Differentiation has improved with the introduction of collaborative team teaching classes. Administration has ensured well-distributed leadership through the grade teams. Attendance has gone up. The inquiry team has been working effectively to raise the performance of students in Grade 9 who were causing concern across a number of subject areas. Of the group initially identified, the school has removed over half from the category because they made such good progress. The remaining students are now on various intensive remedial programs.

The school has not yet made best use of the information that is available about the progress and performance of the different groups within the school. As yet, it has not used the data to help it quickly uncover areas of underachievement and select more effective remedial strategies or to set more specific final and interim goals.

### **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 a very strong focus on each student's personal and academic performance, and gathers accurate information on individual performance. It is at an

early stage of development when it comes to analyzing and using data about the performance of all the different groups in the school. The school is not yet using the full range of information to supplement its effective work with individuals.

The close focus on each student has resulted in good achievement for students who require individualized attention to support their academic or social progress, such as special education students, English language learners or those whose performance is causing concern. The staff have a good understanding of students' past performance, which they use to try to uncover patterns and trends, although this process is better developed with the seniors than with younger students. Parents say, "The teachers see the kids' potential when they join the school in ninth grade. They do their best to get them there as soon as they can."

The school regularly compares its performance with others in its peer horizon. It plans to take this one-step further by seeking out schools with similar characteristics that are outstandingly effective, in order to identify and adopt cutting-edge practice. The school has accurately identified a need to update teachers' skills in handling student data. This training is under way and data handling has been a well-received focus for bi-monthly professional development sessions.

**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 school is good at setting goals for individual students, and very good at conveying this information to parents. Goal setting for different grades or groups of students is not so well developed. The goals set are of variable quality, and often stated in terms of improving services rather than specifying precisely desired outcomes expected from the students. The school has recognized this and has already begun to make improvements. For example, the school has set specific, realistic and challenging goals for this year's graduating students, based on its tracking data. There are plans to introduce a similar process this year to set goals for other grades. While the school has available to it detailed information about the performance and progress of the different groups, it does not yet take this information and use it well enough to set goals for these groups and help staff identify any underachievement more quickly.

Students and their families agree that there are very high expectations placed upon the students to succeed. Parents very much appreciate that the staff at the school do not tolerate low standards in either social or academic development. A parent gave a good example of this, "I love the mandated homework help center. If my son doesn't turn up and do his homework, half an hour later I get a phone call." Parents enjoy the strong partnership and the benefits that this brings. One parent said, "First week, my son comes home and says 'It's a boot camp.' When he said that, I had a wide smile on my face."

The school is quick to identify individual students who are struggling and has introduced programs such as credit recovery and Kaplan in order to get them quickly back on track. Staff keep them on track socially too, and the students understand why. One student

said, "They have strict rules which they enforce like the dress code. We don't like it, but we know it prepares us for our future."

**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 provides the students with an exciting curriculum, including visits to the Space Camp in Alabama and challenging outdoor programs. It aligns the activities well to students' interests, although girls say they would also like more activities such as dance and drama. The lack of detailed performance and progress information means that staff are not always able to differentiate instruction as well they might.

Because the school is relatively small, teachers know the students very well, and they make good use of this knowledge to ensure that lessons are interesting and run smoothly. The staff rely heavily on their knowledge of each individual to plan their instruction. In a small school, this can work quite effectively. However, because the school has not yet developed a formalized approach to measuring group progress, teachers are not able to incorporate this information into their lessons. This means that the match between the activities and strategies on offer may not be the best ones for every student in the class. The school has made a start in overcoming the issue. For example, in grade 9 this year, it gave teachers lists of students who were at risk of failing so that they could modify their instruction in order to give them the most effective support.

The climate for learning is very positive. Staff display care and respect for the students and for each other. They provide good role models for the students who clearly trust the teachers. Students say they feel very comfortable in confiding in staff, and will go to them for academic or personal support if they need it. As one student said, "These teachers really care. If you are failing, they support you. They let you know how well you are doing and what more you need to do even better."

The principal makes sound financial and staffing decisions and consults staff where possible. The administration informally evaluates these decisions with reference to the impact they have made on outcomes for students. This informal approach means that the school is not consistently able to see whether it has achieved value for money over all its major decisions.

**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.**

The principal, together with senior staff, manages the school well, keeps a careful check on discipline and provides his staff with good support and feedback on their performance. However, teachers do not always have sufficient opportunities to visit each other's classrooms and the link between professional development and student

data is not quite as strong as it could be. However, teachers who are new to the profession find the good support they are given by both the principal and their colleagues enables them to become effective quickly.

The school runs very smoothly. On the rare occasions where students find it difficult to behave well, there are good, consistent procedures in place to deal with this. The principal monitors closely the number of behavioral incidents, and these have reduced over the last year. Consequently, students feel secure, and there is almost no bullying. As one student said, "If you don't like somebody, you have to deal with them by talking. It's too small a school to do anything else."

There are strong good links with external entities such as the Atlas Learning Community, Urban Assembly, and the other schools that occupy the same building. The majority of the school's students attend the Montefiore Clinic within the building. This means that little time is lost if students require health advice or medical attention. There is very effective collaboration between the various agencies and support services to give guidance and advice to students and their families. This is particularly fruitful for families of special education students or those who are struggling academically or personally.

**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.**

Where goals are effectively set, for example for individual students, the school monitors progress well and modifies strategies where necessary. Interim assessments take place, such as mock Regents, so that there are early indications if a student is going off track. Because goals are not consistently set for all the groups within the school, it cannot evaluate its effectiveness or revise its plans based on complete information and improve goals and plans. The school does well in monitoring students' social development and in coming up with innovative strategies and remedial action if there are concerns.

Teachers receive regular formal and informal feedback about their performance and the necessary improvements. As part of this, the administration gives staff a checklist of improvement points within agreed timeframes. They find this advice very helpful. One typical comment from a teacher is, "I find the observations pretty accurate, and most helpful. They give me good solutions and ideas which I can work on."

There is a strategic planning cycle in place with successive targets based on the information on interim and final outcomes. However, the school does not track the progress of the different groups in the school, even though it has a good range of data available to do this analysis. This hampers the school's capacity to evaluate its effectiveness and to make improvements.

The principal's stamp is visible everywhere in the school. The whole school community knows where he is taking the school and they are committed to this vision. They like his dynamic but distributed leadership. Parents say they love having him as a principal, students value his availability and teachers value his support.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>SCHOOL NAME: Urban Assembly School for Careers in Sports</b> | Δ | ▷ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
| <b>Quality Score</b>  |   |   | 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 |   |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>  |   |   | 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 |   |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>  |   |   | 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 |   |
| <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, 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        |          |
| <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>                          |