



**Department of  
Education**

*Joel I. Klein, Chancellor*

**Quality Review Report  
Office of Accountability  
2008-2009**

# **Quality Review Report 2008-2009**

**Urban Assembly School for Law and Justice**

**High School 483**

**283 Adams Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11201**

**Principal: Shannon Curran**

**Dates of review: February 26 - 27, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: Salvador Fernandez**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Urban Assembly for Law and Justice is a high school with 445 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 77% Black, 21% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 2% special education students. Boys account for 29% of the students enrolled and girls account for 71%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 92.2%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is well developed.**

The Urban Assembly School for Law and Justice thrives on ensuring that students get the best quality education possible in a democratic forum. Outside service providers support the theme of the school and provide students with internships that impact positively on the students' social, emotional and academic growth. The college office is an integral part of the school, ensuring that every student is prepared and ready for college. The school has an extremely effective system to communicate high expectations with families. Parents are very pleased with the nurture, care and additional services the school provides for their child. As one parent stated, "this is the first time I have been in a school where I can trust the teachers, counselor and principal".

The new principal has collaboratively developed a culture of highly reflective professionals that are constantly seeking ways to improve their pedagogy. Parents, students, teachers and school leaders all review formative and summative data to plan school-wide goals that are strategically monitored to improve student outcomes. This year the school has started to deepen the work of setting individual learning targets for units of study in core subjects by developing the teachers' ability to incorporate College-readiness Performance Assessment System. Additionally, by incorporating the new assessment system the school is moving closer towards developing a structure to enable teachers to enhance their practice by setting individual learning goals to strategically monitor, evaluate and track students' progress.

Since the previous Quality Review, the school has solidified a strong culture of professional collaboration where teachers work collegially, make decisions on instructional practices and revise curricula to improve student outcomes. During common planning teachers analyze and interpret formative and summative data to identify skill areas of needs and provide students with interventions to improve student outcomes. Teachers link the skill areas among core subjects in order for students to make connections and reinforce their learning. Teachers do not always plan thematic units that are interdisciplinary, and not just connected by skill needs to ensure that students have deepened connections in content based learning. Teachers do not consistently deliver differentiated instruction and activities that will engage, challenge and motivate students at all achievement levels.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The new principal has collaboratively developed a school culture that is reflective and a coherent and motivational vision for the school's future.
- The school has an effective data system for recording, analyzing and interpreting a wide-range of formative and summative assessments to make strategic organizational decisions that tracks students' progress in all core subjects.
- School leaders and faculty have highly effective systems to communicate with families about scholarship, academic progress, behavior and attendance updates.
- The school has established a structured professional collaboration culture where teachers work collegially, make decisions on instructional practices and revise curricula to improve student outcomes during weekly common planning.
- School leaders make very effective use of data and involve teachers, parents and students at several stages in the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan to set school-wide goals.
- The school effectively utilizes their original partnership with Urban Assembly and has extended partnerships with additional providers to support the Law and Justice theme of the school, which makes a positive impact on students' social, emotional and academic growth.
- The school's long-term goals include measurable interim checkpoints that measure and evaluate student progress, instructional practices and allows for revisions as needed to ensure student learning.

### What the school needs to improve

- Further develop teachers' ability to plan interdisciplinary links that will facilitate students learning in making connections between core subjects to reinforce their learning.
- Enhance school-wide structures that enable all teachers to develop their practice in setting individual learning goals (targets) for students in all core subjects that include interim benchmarks with specific timeframes to strategically monitor, evaluate and track students' progress.
- Provide teachers with additional professional development opportunities in implementing differentiated instruction and activities that will engage, challenge and motivate students at all achievement levels.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

Since the last Quality Review, the school has made significant progress in developing a very sophisticated data collection system that enables teachers to analyze and interpret a wide range of formative and summative data in all core subjects. Teachers have received well-targeted support in the importance of understanding data. Consequently, they are confident in analyzing and interpreting data to monitor student progress. They use College-readiness Performance Assessment System and Acuity effectively to analyze specific skills in need of improvement and trends in achievement to provide necessary intervention for students at all levels. Weekly grade level meetings deepen the work by giving teachers the opportunity to analyze students' performance, behavior and attendance data for their cohort. This provides them with information to monitor student progress and make revision as needed to their instructional practice to meet students' needs. The new principal has continued the work to analyze all sub-group data rigorously. Newly formed team teaching classes have successfully addressed the needs of special and general education students. The data showed boys were under achieving when compared to girls. Thus, the school provided intervention classes for boys, which has successfully help narrow this achievement gap.

School leaders and faculty do an excellent job communicating with families regarding students' progress. They update student outcome information on TeacherEase, an effective web based program that provides parents and students with a progress report every three weeks. Parents are extremely pleased with the communication from the school because it keeps them updated about their child's progress towards graduation. As stated by one parent, "teachers are extremely professional and always keep us informed."

**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 leaders have collaboratively involved teachers, parents and students at several stages in the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan. They made effective use of the progress report, learning environment surveys and the previous Quality Review report to set school-wide goals. During weekly and monthly meetings, teachers analyze formative and summative assessment data to set grade, class and individuals goals in order for students to track scholarship progress. This year the school has started to deepen the work of setting individual learning goals for students by developing teachers' ability to incorporate College-readiness Performance Assessment

System into the curriculum. The assessment system provides teachers with the ability to integrate activities and stimulate higher order thinking within challenging context. Teachers also are able to set learning targets for classes to meet. Students speak positively of this new system. As one student stated, “classes have become more challenging because the school implemented learning targets in core subjects.” The school does not yet have the structure in place for setting individual learning goals that provide individual students with next steps in a timely fashion to track their individual progress in all core subjects that include interim benchmarks with specific timeframes that strategically monitors, evaluate and track individual student progress. However, by incorporating the new assessment system the school is moving closer towards developing the structure that would enable them to set individual learning goals because it has shown the importance of setting learning targets to enhance student outcome.

The school communicates high expectations to all stakeholders by the on-going conversations that occur daily about being a professional student. Teachers have class rubrics that hold students accountable to what is an acceptable comportment. During advisory meetings staff remind students of scholarship performance and give them opportunities to find out what to do if they are lacking credits. The school monitors students carefully and keeps them on track towards meeting graduation requirements. It has systematically embedded the school-wide goal of College Readiness and Preparedness in the daily rituals and routines of the school. This is evident by the successful graduation rate of the school’s first graduating class at 90%, and 84% were matriculated to college.

**Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

The school curriculum provides many opportunities that enhance students’ skills and interests. Teachers tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of their students. They meet during common planning and have integrated reading and writing across all subjects. Teachers began by analyzing student outcome data and identifying areas for improvement. They then prepared units of studies that focused on the skills needed to increase student achievement. However, the school recognizes that additional professional development is necessary in order for teachers to deliver differentiated instruction and activities that will engage, challenge and motivate students at all achievement levels. Teachers are starting to plan lessons that are interdisciplinary to ensure that students make connections among core subjects to reinforce learning.

The school makes organizational decisions using information gathered from grade level meetings and the analysis of formative and summative data to develop rigorous instruction and ensure students meet their learning goals. Teachers have a democratic voice at the school and revise curriculum as needed. The school leaders value their opinion, which promotes a professional environment. Teachers are not afraid to take risks and are reflective in practice. As one student stated, “teachers are constantly changing to improve their teaching.”

The school has worked very hard this year to develop an environment of mutual trust and respect. At the beginning of this school year, the staff went on a retreat with the new principal to build a strong relationship that focuses on student achievement. Teachers and students treat each other with the utmost respect. The school’s culture of

professionalism trickles down to all constituencies and everyone is open and respectful of each other's values and beliefs.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

Professional development is the cornerstone of this new school with new leadership. Formal, informal, mid-year check-ins and interclass visitations provide teachers with feedback that enhances their instructional practices and are clearly evident in the day-to-day operation of school. Leaders ask teachers to set goals to improve practice. Mentors and buddy teachers fully support new teachers to meet their developmental needs. All teachers are extremely reflective and focused on improving their pedagogy. Teachers meet weekly to share best practices, modify curriculum and revise school-wide. In addition, teachers from the school present best practices at Urban Assembly conferences, which contribute towards validating their hard work. School leaders provide teachers with a plethora of high quality professional development opportunities to improve instructional practices, although not enough is provided for further refinement of differentiated instruction to insure that all students are engaged and challenged at all achievement levels.

The inquiry team's target population is the students in the lowest third that failed two or more subjects and/or are disconnected with the school's code of conduct. Their focus is to restructure the advisory program by reducing the student to teacher ratio to provide better support for this population. They have just finished stage one, which dealt with the enhancement of their skills and knowledge. This focus will impact the advisory program, so that all teachers improve interpersonal relationships that result in keeping students interested and focused in learning. The team now intends to implement this work school-wide.

The school provides an excellent array of outside partnerships for students to have internship opportunities that promote learning and keep their interest high. The school effectively uses their original partnership with Urban Assembly and has extended partnerships with additional providers to help support the Law and Justice theme of the school. This has a positive impact on students' social, emotional and academic growth. In addition, the college office is an integral part of the school and promotes high expectations about college readiness and preparedness starting in grade 9. A college advisor meets with every student to go over different college choices that best fits their profile. The advisor keeps students aware of all financial information and makes sure to limit the amount of money students borrow. The counselor ensures that students take ownership in tracking their progress. Students go on college trips in order for them to make smart choices.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 well developed.**

The school has clear plans and goals, which include interim measurable goals to improve student outcomes and instructional practices that consistently evaluate success and make adjustments as needed throughout the year. The school has a consistent system in place using interim checkpoints to measure student progress to improve student outcomes. The teachers make excellent use of formative and summative data to revise plans and plan interventions for students. They use College-readiness Performance Assessment System and Acuity effectively to identify specific skill needs of students to modify lessons to improve student outcomes. As a result of this information, teachers meet weekly to share best practices, discuss data findings and make necessary revisions to the curriculum to meet the changing academic needs of students. Teachers assign learning targets to units of study from the information attained through the College-readiness Performance Assessment System in content subjects for students to track their progress. Every three weeks teachers generate progress reports, which are sent home to keep parents informed of their child's progress.

The staff fully supports the vision of the new principal. She has collaboratively developed a culture of highly reflective professionals that are constantly seeking ways to improve their pedagogy. As one teacher stated, "we are all high achievers". That is very apparent by the high levels of conversation the teachers have during their weekly meetings about student learning. The School Self Evaluation Form demonstrates the effectiveness of teacher professional development plans and provides evidence of their above average growth. The school is meeting its goal for all students to be college ready and prepared by providing a quality education that equips students with all the skills necessary to be successful in college on a daily basis. School leaders and faculty are committed to high standards and are always looking for ways to deepen their work to provide students with a well-rounded educational experience.

## School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: Urban Assembly School for Law and Justice</b>	△	▷	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>				<b>X</b>
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?				<b>X</b>
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?				<b>X</b>
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?				<b>X</b>
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?				<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				<b>X</b>
<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 student’s learning.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?				<b>X</b>
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?				<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

### DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

**Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.**

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?				X
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				<b>X</b>

**Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.**

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X	
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?				X
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?				X
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				<b>X</b>

**Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?				X
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X	
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?				X
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?				X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				<b>X</b>

<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	▷	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>