



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

The Urban Assembly Academy of Government and Law

High School 305

350 Grand Street

New York

NY 10002

Principal: Joaquin Tamayo

Dates of review: December 3 - 4, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Francesca Peña

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Urban Assembly Academy of Government and Law is a high school with 323 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 44% Black, 45% Hispanic, 8% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 1.5% English language learners and 14.5% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007- 2008 was 81.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 62% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The school has created a new online system that collects critical data streams in a single location. School leaders and faculty members have access to the data center, which tracks a wide range of data on individual students including attendance, grades, uniform and honor code compliance, anecdotal logs and contact information. The data center provides a centralized location for the large quantities of data produced by the school, and allows school leaders and faculty to generate a comprehensive picture of each student's strengths and needs.

The school has devised rigorous interim- and class-based assessments that align well with curriculum benchmarks and link closely to goal setting for individual and groups in most subjects. The school has also created an advisory system that utilizes the data center to keep advisors apprised of student progress. All advisors keep logs of student progress, and share their data with students and parents on a quarterly basis. This keeps families engaged in the learning process, and allows staff and students to become more reflective on their work.

The administration efficiently used data from the school environment survey, progress reports, input from faculty and staff, and school-wide student performance data as the foundation for staffing, budgetary and curricular plans. The school actively promotes a positive learning environment that fosters personal, social and academic development. The school investment in after school activities, a new counseling office, and tutoring programs has paid off huge dividends for attendance and student achievements. Attendance has improved from 81% to 88%, and the passing rates have moved from 67% to 85% as evidenced by the results of the first quarter report card.

There is a promising development in the range of school improvement initiatives with the new appointment of two assistant principals who, in collaboration with grade team leaders, use information gathered at meetings to make decisions regarding school, academic and administrative policy in support of better student outcomes.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a very effective leader who communicates and lives the vision of the school in his daily interactions with students, staff and visitors.
- The school actively promotes a positive learning environment that fosters personal, social and academic development.
- The school effectively involves its constituents in the compilation and evaluation of its improvement plan and effectively conveys its high expectations about attendance and academic performance.
- The school has devised rigorous interim- and class-based assessments that align well with curriculum benchmarks and link well to goal setting for individual and groups in most subjects.
- The school committee and team structures promote distributed leadership, capacity building and inclusion.
- The school has devised a comprehensive and detailed differentiated professional development for each member of the staff which promotes personal and school goals.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the curriculum to include more challenging classes to meet the needs of high achieving students.
- Develop consistency in differentiated approaches to instruction which meet the needs of individual students.
- Build upon the good practices being developed to achieve consistency in grading policies in all core subjects.
- Enhance communication with parents to ensure that they understand the new emphasis on learning goals and the grading policy, so that they become more directly involved in their children's learning.

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 proficient

The school is committed to using data to move in the direction of empowering students to set meaningful learning goals in collaboration with their teachers and advisors. The administration uses data from the learning environment survey, input from faculty and staff and school-wide student performance data as the foundation for staffing, budgetary and curricular plans. In the classroom, faculty uses course performance data and results from Regent's examinations to plan standards-based curricula for all courses offered, and to ensure that curricula is appropriately scaffolded and sufficiently reinforced. Grade teams meet bi-weekly and use performance data on a regular basis, including course averages, samples of student work, attendance and cut data, discipline reports and teacher anecdotes to develop individual student interventions. The department teams also meet bi-monthly to review achievement data as a means of informing instructional and curricular decisions. Both teams are utilizing data to better meet the needs of students. As a result, data from the first quarter progress reports indicate a 13% increase in student achievement in comparison to last year.

The school has developed a new progress report template in order to transmit more useful information to students and parents about students' progress to meeting learning outcomes. After the first marking period, subject and grade level teachers met on a regular basis to review the effectiveness of the new progress report template. As a result of these planning sessions, the school further refined the template for the second progress report card period. This new and improved template requires teachers to give specific written feedback to each student on the extent to which he/she has made progress towards meeting the learning goals for each subject. The use of a standardized data-collection and analysis protocol ensures that conversations regarding student progress are more systematic.

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 and faculty set clear goals at the beginning of the year; 90% attendance, 90% achievement, and 90% uniform compliance. Leaders derived these goals from an analysis of school-wide data, reviewed at the conclusion of each quarter. These goals are shared with the entire community through the parent newsletter, the school website, parent-teacher conferences, parent association meetings and monthly town hall meetings. At the first interim assessment, 80% of the students are on track to meet the goals set in each of their courses.

The attendance team meets weekly to assess attendance data and identify students with excessive absences or lateness. The team then works with families to create a plan for improving attendance. As a result, attendance has increased by 6% thus far this year.

Grade advisors, teachers and the parent coordinator play a significant role in ensuring that all parents are informed of their child's progress. Weekly advisory sessions with students give faculty an opportunity to review regularly student progress toward learning goals. These sessions are reinforced by quarterly meetings, in person and over the phone, with parents. However, the practice of setting specific subject goals and sharing them with parents is not yet a consistent practice throughout the disciplines. The grade level team, department teams and advisors develop individual action plans for those students who have become a special focus or require considerable support to move forward.

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 actively promotes a positive learning environment that fosters personal, social and academic development. In order to help students develop a supportive climate for learning, the school has instituted a weekly advisory class. Advisory classes are split by gender and grade level. Each grade's advisory program focuses on one of the school's four defining characteristics: Responsibility, Collaboration, Civic-Mindedness and College-Bound. School leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards. In response to student demand, and to help students meet their academic needs, the school has added several advanced placement and honors courses.

Departments have been meeting bi-monthly since August to create curriculum maps for every course offered at the school. Each map identifies clear and developmentally appropriate learning outcomes for the course, and is scaffolded in a way that builds on what students have learned in previous courses. Departments also use data from assessments and scholarship reports to monitor student progress toward course objectives, and to adjust course contents wherever necessary. The school's revised schedule allows for a more responsive approach to curriculum development, leading to greater emphasis on student achievement of their learning goals.

The principal and cabinet rely on data to make strategic decisions for budgeting, hiring new staff and scheduling. For example, in response to the needs of its special education population, the school added Collaborative Team Teaching classes in all core content areas across the grade levels. These classes meet the needs of special education students and general education students in a least restrictive environment. The school also offers several team-taught courses in physical education and social studies.

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.

The school's committee and team structures promote distributed leadership, capacity building and inclusion. Leadership capacity is built through grade level team leaders and grade teams, department chairs, the addition of two assistant principals and a director of student services. As a result, student achievement and involvement in after school activities has dramatically increased from 47% to 80%, attendance has improved from 81% to 88% and passing rates have moved from 67% to 85%.

The school has devised a comprehensive and detailed differentiated professional development for each member of the staff, promoting personal and school goals. The administration provide teachers with a professional values rubric that details the various elements of distinguished instruction in order to instruct students at increasingly effective levels. During the summer faculty planning retreat, teachers had the opportunity to set personal goals for themselves, enabling them to contribute towards meeting school-wide goals. Teachers reflect on these goals quarterly and adjust instruction accordingly, which has been reflected in improved scholarship reports.

The administration conducts regular formal and informal observations to support the development of teachers' instructional skills. Tenth grade collaborative team teaching teachers have formed an Inquiry Team to analyze data of special education students, to share best practices, to conduct inter-visitations and to serve as a model of professional development practice for all teachers. This has resulted in improved scholarship reports of the special education students.

The school has established excellent partnerships with Henry Street Settlement, The Justice Resource Center, Project Help and the Educational Alliance to provide after school and leadership programming for all students. Investments in these outside resources has paid great dividend in the first three months of the 2008 - 2009 year. Nearly 90% of the senior class has completed college applications and about 80% of the junior class is scheduled to attend Princeton Review courses starting in December.

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 principal has a clear vision for the school, shared with and supported by the whole faculty. The administration has worked in tandem to establish a collaborative culture that encourages self-reflection and honest debate. This has led to the faculty's commitment to the goals in the Comprehensive Educational Plan. Students and staff complete an individualized self-reflection and goal setting protocol during the new "ReflectFEST!" celebration. This is an opportunity to establish benchmarks for improved performance and to increase student ownership of their own learning. The results of the first reflection survey indicate a dramatic increase in teachers and students satisfaction, leading to a huge decline in the number of violent and gang related incidents at the school. This has been an important factor in helping the school improve its academic performance.

Using daily, monthly, and quarterly performance data, administration, in concert with grade and department teams, is able to plan and execute interim interventions that have improved important school indicators, including attendance, school-wide discipline, school-wide incentive programs, and the quality of professional development provided to teachers through weekly team meetings.

Advisors monitor student performance weekly and conference with their advisees on a bi-weekly basis regarding both academic and social-emotional progress. Advisors also engage parents and families following a review of student performance data at the conclusion of each quarter.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Urban Assembly Academy of Government and Law	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
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.				
<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?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
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?			X	
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?				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 student’s learning.				
<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?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?				X
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?			X	
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?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

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.

To what extent do ...	Δ	➤	✓	+
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
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X

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.

To what extent do school leaders...	Δ	➤	✓	+
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
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X

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.

To what extent do...	Δ	➤	✓	+
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
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X

Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed