

# Quality Review Report 2010-2011

**Urban Assembly Institute Of Math & Science For Young  
Women**

**Middle-High School K527**

**283 Adams Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11201**

**Co-Principals: Kiri Soares & Kelly DeMonaco**

**Dates of review: November 3 - 4, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Veronica Yurcik**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Urban Assembly Institute of Math & Science for Young Women is a middle-high school with 318 students from grade 6 through grade 10. The school population comprises 83% Black, 11% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 0% of the students enrolled and girls account for 100%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 94.6%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school has proactively built capacity by establishing very effective partnerships that insure integrated youth development services.
  - The Schools Attuned program helped teachers develop better evidence-based assessment skills improving their understanding of students' emotional learning needs. This training has promoted more strategic classroom differentiation through discussion at Kid Talk meetings resulting in increased engagement in learning for targeted students.
  - The school uses a data-based internal tracking system successfully, which enables staff and community-based partners to identify at risk students in a timely and efficient way. As a result, parents state that the school conveys to them changes in their daughters' behavior and performance and initiates immediate assistance. Students and parents express appreciation for the wide range of support and enrichment opportunities provided free of charge after school, including the arts, career education, academic support and enrichment, social work services, family living and sex education, dental, eye, and medical care.
- The school's dedicated commitment to meeting the needs of all students shapes a positive culture of academic and social-emotional support.
  - The school effectively seeks out and uses data to guide improvements using frequent surveys to inform practices. Based on teacher feedback, supervisors changed mixed grade advisories to single grade advisory groups, which allowed current teachers who know students best to serve them and provide targeted academic support. Administrators responded to the Learning Environment Survey by increasing outreach and by means of a successful curriculum night that was well received by parents.
  - Each teacher gives careful attention to an assigned group of students and acts as the main point person for a student, insuring that students are matched to academic and other support services. Partner agencies describe the assigned teachers as the "caretaker for those children".
- Intentional organizational decisions support initiatives to achieve the school's prescribed instructional goals.
  - A director of development procured a multi-million dollar grant for after-school programs and ensures seamless on-going coordination and outreach with onsite and university partners. The school uses Impact Ed, an online grading system, that enables clear articulation of academic and character goals, mastery grading, and improved parent communication.
  - The school made a strategic decision to hire a new dean, who does immediate follow-up with students and parents, decreasing discipline referrals and improving on-time arrival. Recognizing the need to improve eighth grade performance, the school specifically recruited a teacher with

a proven record of success in eighth grade math supporting improved student outcomes.

- Strong belief systems contribute to classroom practices that shape differentiated learning opportunities for students.
  - School leadership definitively describes the school's belief system stating: "Students learn best collaboratively..." Purposeful formation of groups with assigned tasks that require student-to-student communication is a common practice in all classrooms and viewed as a requisite skill for future college graduation for all.
  - Differentiating assignments is a common practice in all classrooms. Teachers use exit tickets and interim checks to form ability groups and modify work tasks matching students learning needs and strengths.
- Teachers work steadfastly to set differentiated learning paths for students who struggle academically.
  - Subject and grade level teachers meet frequently to review student work and assessments and to set differentiated goals using data benchmark documents, which detail targets and inform necessary strategy work in the classroom.
  - Science teachers, recognizing patterns of deficiency, changed classroom practice placing greater emphasis on measurement, analysis of graphs and diagrams, and vocabulary instruction. The focus on vocabulary development resulted in changes in lab formats, and inclusion of vocabulary quizzes and cloze activities. A teacher states, "Students are taking vocabulary more seriously" and are "more prepared for tests".
- Professional development opportunities promote continuous evaluation of practice and further leadership opportunity to improve pedagogy.
  - Scheduled weekly professional development and grade and subject teams maintain a momentum for on-going reflection. This fosters accountability as teams set goals, use data to evaluate success and next steps, and share strategies identifying cross content connections.
  - The school promotes distributive leadership by including all staff members on school committees that encompass instructional, student welfare, management and capacity building concerns. Committee chairs are part of the school cabinet that meets weekly and acts as the central decision-making body. A new teacher described the school's distributive leadership opportunities as "Big time, this is my first year and I am doing so much."

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Improve the rigor of academic tasks and their alignment to key State standards to insure consistent development of higher-order thinking skills in content-rich academic tasks across grades and subjects.
  - While the school has made some purposeful choices emphasizing key standards and is working on alignment with the new Common Core State

Standards, the work does not sufficiently differentiate the continuum of content skills needed across grades and subjects to close the achievement gap. The school's intensive concentration on The Key Cognitive Strategies Model for enabling college readiness is disproportionate to attention given to task alignment, thus weakening the necessary focus on standards-based content to address learning needs.

- Lesson planning emphasizes the development of essential questions and meta-cognitive thinking. However, rigor of cognitive demand is inconsistent across grades and subject areas. For example, some students struggle productively with mathematical tasks that require applying math concepts to solve new problems and verbalize reasoning strategies. Other students practice algorithms, complete worksheets or follow modeled examples without making specific applications or demonstrating ability to describe their math learning.
- Strengthen alignment of assessments to key standards to gauge student academic progress and mastery more accurately.
  - Teacher teams use and create interim assessments to identify learning needs and share strategies, but primarily place emphasis on understanding individual student learning needs rather than on the needs of student subgroups.
  - The school uses Acuity interim assessments aligned to standards. However, they also place emphasis on other assessments that evaluate students in categories such as apprentice and novice that do not sufficiently provide teachers with information on performance specifically related to key standards. The development of aligned rubrics is a work in progress.
- Refine systems to monitor progress toward meeting goals more precisely.
  - School supervisors and teacher leaders purposefully and regularly access performance results to analyze progress. However, transparent systems that communicate and illuminate differentiated results are a work in progress.
  - Teacher teams use a detailed school-designed benchmark document to identify interim indicators to progress. However, they are still seeking a way to re-visit these documents efficiently.
- Strengthen teacher performance evaluation practices to advance school-wide instructional pedagogy to improve student academic outcomes.
  - Although school supervisors are proactive in providing regular and detailed written feedback, focused attention on specific actionable next steps linked to explicit teacher goals is not sufficiently evident in lengthy formal and informal observation reports.
  - The school provides a wide range of supports and attends to individual needs in designing targeted professional development, but does not adequately differentiate support that focuses on the curriculum content and rigor necessary to produce improved student performance.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

<b>School name: Urban Assembly Institute of Math &amp; Science for Young Women</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		<b>X</b>		
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			<b>X</b>	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>
<b>Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>		
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			<b>X</b>	

**Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.**

<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X	
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X	

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

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X	
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X	
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X	
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X

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

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X	
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X	
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X	
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed