



**Department of  
Education**

*Joel I. Klein, Chancellor*

**Quality Review Report  
Division of Performance and Accountability  
2010-2011**

# **Quality Review Report 2010-2011**

**Urban Assembly School of Design and Construction**

**04M300**

**525 West 50th Street  
Manhattan  
NY 10019**

**Principal: Matthew Willoughby**

**Dates of review: May 2-3, 2011  
Lead Reviewer: Sarah Goodman**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Urban Assembly School of Design and Construction is a high school with 409 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 26% Black, 61% Hispanic, 5% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 75% of the students enrolled and girls account for 25%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 88.3%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Teacher teams utilize a distributed leadership model to engage the faculty in inquiry work that focuses on student learning
  - All teachers at the school are involved with a content area team and a grade team. Each content team is facilitated by a leader and focuses on student work. The unified protocol to look at student work from selected students in the bottom third of the school was developed by the facilitator team under the leadership of the principal. In addition, some teachers are additionally involved in an instructional rounds group focused on classroom assessments. The consistent collaborative work to reflect on and adjust instruction has led to unified teaching practices that narrows the achievement gap for ELL and IEP sub groups and a professional work environment that promotes high teacher retention.
- The school community works together to create a safe and inclusive environment to support student learning.
  - Students throughout the school mention a variety of people they can go to with a problem. Parents were quick to point out the support and counseling they receive from the principal as a result of his accessibility and background in social work. The school also provides a guidance counselor to each grade that meets individually with students several times a year to review and support their academic progress.
  - The school has a mission to prepare students for the professional world. Over the summer, the dean of discipline and other faculty developed a new freshman advisory program to support the transition of students new to the building into the college prep culture. Non-academic staff follows a shared advisory curriculum each week that talks to freshman about academics, bullying, and the school dress code. This program has led to more open communication among freshman students and faculty that has reduced discipline issues, increased 9<sup>th</sup> grade student engagement in design class and increased the number of students following the dress code.
- The school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to structure teacher and student time to effectively meet the learning needs of students.
  - The administrative team hired additional teachers to allow them to reconfigure the schedule with an extra period each day. This makes it possible for a wide variety of courses to be offered within a small school setting. For example, a circuit class has been introduced that previews and builds the skills and materials that English language learners and students with disabilities need to keep up with the work. Per session funds are used to fund an afterschool homework center and special interest clubs. As a result, all students have individualized schedules and supports that promote high levels of student achievement on scholarship reports and regents tests.

- The faculty embraces a series of clear goals that direct organizational and instructional decisions to support college readiness and social-emotional learning.
  - After reviewing a wide range of data last year, the administrative team implemented a theory of action to increase the time available for teachers to focus on rigorous instruction and decrease other tasks. This team takes ownership of tracking attendance, credit accumulation, and discipline data. They also implement a revised 9<sup>th</sup> grade advisory program to support the transition to high school and build an academic culture at the school right away so the focus can be on learning with the new integration of learning targets as a way to implement conceptual learning.
- The school promotes youth development through outside partnerships and school wide celebrations that support students holistically
  - Student accomplishments are regularly celebrated through an annual poetry performance unit, weekly “shout outs,” musical productions and more. Outside partnerships extend the school’s focus on professionalism with exposure to a range of internships related to the school theme. A new annual design competition partners students with teams of adults from architecture firms in a fundraising event. The community service requirement offers structure and support to encourage students to grow through service learning within their school, with the co-located D75 academy, and with numerous outside organizations.
- The faculty continuously refines the curriculum planning process to unify instruction and develop conceptual learning throughout the school.
  - Individual teachers, teacher teams, and the school as a whole are involved in curriculum development throughout the year. All of the teachers have developed curriculum maps that include key standards, assessments, and college readiness work. Daily learning targets are found within these maps and posted for students to focus instruction and develop cognitive growth. Consequently, content area teams have been able to identify student weakness by examining data and student work and develop common instructional approaches to address them. For example, every ELA class includes a work of Shakespeare, Socratic seminars, essay writing, and a “poetry out loud” unit to ensure consistent pedagogy and rigor in the department. The social studies department developed a writing mechanics poster that is present in all classes throughout the school and has led to better writing and deeper integration of quotes across the content areas.

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

- Support professional growth through a systematic observation, feedback, and mentoring protocol to build consistency in instructional practices.
  - The school administration has supported professional development through a number of teacher team configurations, informal and formal mentor pairings, and weekly staff meetings and trainings. However, while informal observations and inter-visitations occur, there is no structured program in place to formally observe teachers and target instructional practice. In

addition, the school has not created a formal tenure process for the teachers that are new to the profession. Without a standardized protocol observations and tenure, the administration is less able to support instructional practices.

- Develop a system to evaluate the instructional decisions made by the faculty to support teacher development.
  - The school has devoted time and resources to support the creation of curriculum maps and teaching practices that incorporate the evolving state standards. In addition, the administration regularly reviews student performance data to realign student small group support opportunities. However, the school does not currently have a formal system to evaluate the classroom teaching practices and the professional development that supports those practices and assess their impact on student progress.
- Build capacity within the faculty to unify ways to create, share and analyze, assessment data to support student learning.
  - The school currently utilizes a wide range of assessments including incoming student math and reading diagnostics, mock regents exams and college geared project rubrics to examine student learning and make instructional and scheduling changes. However, the school does not have a unified way to track and share student progress towards learning targets. This limits their ability analyze instructional decisions, plan vertically, and communicate with students and families.
- Improve instruction to increase the levels of student engagement and lead to more consistent higher order thinking skill development.
  - The school considers itself a college preparatory academy, and the student work products generated from project based units generally attest to that. However, the level of student engagement within these rigorous classes is inconsistent. While parents and students were quick to say that all of their teachers are hard working, easily accessible, and push high standards, one parent stated that “My child would like more hands-on and exciting activities. I think that would help him work more and get better grades.” When students talked about the classes that helped them learn the most, they spoke of teachers that wove multiple learning opportunities into each unit. Currently, classes and projects are not consistently planned to incorporate higher order thinking and allow multiple entry points for all student to reach their full academic potential.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

|   |           |          |          |           |
|---|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| <b>School name: Urban Assembly School of Design and Construction</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>  | <b>UD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>WD</b> |
|--|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 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? |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |
| 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?               |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |
| 3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?   |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |
| 3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?                                    |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |

**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>   | <b>UD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>WD</b> |
|--|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 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? |           | <b>X</b> |          |           |
| 4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?  |           |          |          | <b>X</b>  |
| 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?        |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |
| 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?  |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |

**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>   | <b>UD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>WD</b> |
|--|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 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?                              |           | <b>X</b> |          |           |
| 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? |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |
| 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?                                       |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |
| 5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?  |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |

**Quality Review Scoring Key**

|           |                       |          |                   |          |                   |           |                       |
|-----------|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| <b>UD</b> | <b>Underdeveloped</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>Developing</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>Proficient</b> | <b>WD</b> | <b>Well Developed</b> |
|-----------|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|