

# Quality Review Report 2010-2011

**Urban Academy Assembly of Civic Engagement**

**08X366**

**650 Hollywood Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10465**

**Principal: Cameron Berube**

**Dates of review: April 4-5, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Timothy Behr**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

Urban Academy Assembly of Civic Engagement is a middle school with 353 students from grade 6 through grade 8. There is an eight plus program in the school. The school population comprises 24% Black, 63% Hispanic, 10% White, 2% Asian, and 1% multiracial student. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 29% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009-2010 was 87.3%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is developing**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal makes informed organizational decisions to support improvements in student learning.
  - The principal created Summer Committees to review and address academic concerns based on the results of the State exams in English language arts and math. Based on this analysis the school's instructional focus is writing in the content areas. Throughout the year the cabinet and teacher team leaders provide professional development, coaching, and protocols to inform instruction and evaluate the progress the students are making in their writing skills. Curriculum maps are updated with reference to the evolving State standards to improve student performance and progress. These initiatives have resulted in positive gains in overall class averages as measured by internally created interim assessments.
  - Student groupings and teacher assignments support learning needs and promote accountable collaboration among faculty. Each student is assigned to a house which was created to provide a small learning environment. Teachers meet weekly and hold themselves accountable for each student's academic progress since they are working with the same cohort of students. Results to date show that there is an increase in student performance as evidenced by formative assessments.
- The administration and teachers use a wide range of data to monitor school priorities and student progress in order to plan instruction and create intervention strategies to improve student learning.
  - The school uses a range of data sources to identify students' needs and set goals that are aligned to the school's key chosen standards to improve student performance. Students receive a baseline assessment using school made interim measurements in core content areas. Using this data academic intervention services are provided to targeted students. As a result, there has been an increase in reading comprehension.
  - Teacher teams meet regularly and plan collaboratively. They analyze and discuss school designed tests, Periodic Assessments and other performance indicators for students and develop strategies to address identified learning needs. This is resulting in a more coherent approach to instruction and learning for the students.
- The administration, faculty and parents share high expectations for improving student achievement.
  - Three times a year, students, parents and advisors meet to analyze student portfolio work, discuss attainment of learning goals, create academic and character goals, and evaluate report card grades along with interim assessment results. Parents report good follow-up and opportunities for reciprocal conversations with teachers about their children's learning.
  - The school provides parents with snap grade, an online reporting system which enables them to keep track of how their children are performing in all classes. The school leadership team voted to support a Saturday

Academy test preparation initiative. Parents feel welcomed in the school and are active partners in the education of their children. As a result, the school is supported in raising students' academic success.

- Professional collaboration is a priority and faculty profit from opportunities to share and develop strengths as individuals and members of the teaching community.
  - Established teams organized by content area utilize the tuning protocol to present their inquiry findings and for developing recommendations to teachers. They meet regularly to review student work, analyze internally designed interim assessment data and develop strategies to address student learning needs. Consequently, team members are expanding their realm of influence beyond their own work and feel empowered to make suggestions to their peers to improve student outcomes.
- The school is reflective, seeking to continually develop and use data to plan realistically for future improvement with students as the focus.
  - The school's practice of meeting regularly with teachers to assist in planning and the implementation of lessons has improved teacher pedagogy and student performance as evidenced by an overall 8-15% class average increase on on-going interim assessments. Professional activities to support all teachers are targeted to improve the conditions for learning. As a result; teachers are implementing instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students.
  - Teachers are encouraged to identify best practices and to turnkey the information with their colleagues. Teachers are sharing their teaching experiences which have resulted in unifying the culture of the school throughout each classroom. Consequently, there exists an atmosphere of a stated shared commitment to the school's expectations and goals.

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

- Establish a rigorous curriculum across all subjects and grades aligned to state standards so that all students are engaged and challenged.
  - After analyzing quantitative and qualitative data the school has identified key standards in English language arts (writing and comprehension) and Math (writing, number sense and operations). However, there is an inconsistency in designing rigorous tasks aligned to selected State standards utilizing higher order thinking skills across all grade levels. Consequently, 83% of students are not performing at grade level in English language arts and 79% of students are not performing at grade level in math as evidenced by NYC Progress Report results.
- Improve differentiation of instruction in classrooms so that all students are challenged to achieve their full potential.
  - Most teachers do not utilize flexible grouping to differentiate instruction. There is some evidence of centers, conferencing or small group targeted assistance. Teachers discuss learning preferences and the academic needs of the students they teach. However, they are not using this information to determine the best instructional practices for various

students during lessons. Therefore most lessons are generic with uneven levels of student engagement to increase student achievement.

- The primary method of instructional practice is direct instruction. Differentiation of instruction is used sporadically. Most students are not being challenged in classes, especially the higher achieving students who are consequently not always appropriately engaged in their work and not making one year's progress in English language arts and math as evidenced by the February 2011 Periodic Assessment results.
- Provide students and parents with feedback on student performance that includes next learning steps in order to improve achievement outcomes.
  - The majority of teacher responses to student work do not provide meaningful feedback to students. Therefore, student's knowledge of themselves as learners at present is unclear and incomplete. Student responses demonstrate lack of clarity regarding their performance. Parents also have difficulty in expressing what they need to do to help their child improve by the end of the school year. Without clear next steps parents do not know which target areas they should support at home. As a result students are not making adequately yearly progress as evidenced by standard test results.
  - Some students, especially those with individual educational plans, who require additional support, do not know their strengths, weaknesses or goals in English language arts and mathematics. This lack of knowledge impedes students' ability to self direct their learning toward accelerating their academic performance.
- Expand the school's use of the classroom observation to identify and share best teaching practices to ensure professional growth and reflection in order to support continued improvement in all classes.
  - Most classroom observation reports do not reference next steps for teacher growth. For example, there is very little rigor in the feedback or the incorporation of student data to drive instruction in the recommendation section of formal observations. Accordingly, teacher development especially in the areas of data informed instruction, rigor, questioning techniques and differentiated instruction do not receive the focus that they merit to support ongoing teacher development.
  - There is little evidence of logs of assistance for teachers or documentation that class and interschool visitations are occurring in order to support professional growth. This lack of differentiated support hinders shared analysis and reflection to reinforce capacity building for all teachers with a range of experience and expertise within their school.
- Refine decision- making by evaluating progress toward defined goals and make the necessary adjustments through regular checkpoints in order determine the impact of decisions on student learning.
  - The lack of measurable goals in some instructional plans limits the school's capacity to evaluate and adjust curricular and instructional practices, especially as they relate to the evolving State standards. Student progress from grade to grade is not exemplary and is limited to a minority of students achieving at grade level. Consequently, across the school high levels of students performing to their full potential is lacking.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

<b>School name: Urban Assembly of Civic Engagement</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>		

<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.</b>							
<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>				
<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.</b>							
<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>					
<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.</b>							
<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>				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<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>