

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**THE URBAN ASSEMBLY SCHOOL FOR GREEN  
CAREERS**

**High School 402  
145 WEST 84<sup>th</sup> STREET  
New York  
NY 10024**

**Principal: Alexandra Rathmann-Noonan**

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Lead Reviewer: Tamika Matheson**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

THE URBAN ASSEMBLY SCHOOL FOR GREEN CAREERS is a high school with 191 students from grade 9 through grade 11. The school population comprises 21% Black, 72% Hispanic, 2% White, 2% Asian students, and 1% other students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 26% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 84.8%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is Proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty design curricula to meet the learning needs of various subgroups, and align curricula to State and Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) to prepare students for post secondary readiness. (1.1)
  - School administrators and teachers use Hess' Cognitive Rigor Matrix to design Problem Based Learning (PBL) and academic tasks that are embedded within day-to-day instruction and unit planning and aligned to State and Common Core Standards. Further, students are required to demonstrate their learning and understanding in multiple ways through evidence based discussions, written responses, and problem solving strategies. Additionally, lessons are scaffolded using graphic organizers, pre-writing activities, accountable talk prompts, and vocabulary development activities, to support and meet the learning needs of students including students with disabilities (SWD) and English language learners (ELLs). Students report that teachers use strategies in class to support their learning and that teachers provide them with feedback to improve their work. As a result, this school moved 1.13% of students with disabilities to less restrictive environments, above its peer group average, and students' class work evidence that curricular decisions accelerate their learning.
- Across classrooms a coherent set of beliefs around how students learn best is evident and articulated which results in meaningful work products aligned to the curriculum and standards. (1.2)
  - The school has embraced a cohesive set of expectations based on Common Core State Standards and College readiness Performance Assessment System (C-PAS) that extends out to challenging academic tasks across content areas. Student generated argumentative essays include claims and counter-claims that are substantiated by supporting details and evidence and are written following the conventions of formal writing . Portfolios for grade 9 and projects for tenth and eleventh grades, consist of process oriented C-PAS tasks embedded within English language arts, math, and social studies curricular. Two times per year students on all grade levels present and defend their projects to a panel of teachers, peers, and/or parents. Classroom environments consist of class libraries, literacy instructional tools, student exemplars with high quality rubric aligned teacher feedback, writing prompts and posted routines, all to foster enhancing reading and writing skills.
  - Teachers use high interest leveled informational texts, coupled with content, scaffolding, and modeling, to design differentiated multiple entry points to learning for all students. Teachers gather information during unison reading to determine strengths and needs of individual students as well as patterns across subgroups to plan targeted and differentiated instructional strategies that include student grouping, oral questioning, and character analysis graphic organizers. Additionally, most students are actively engaged in applying literacy strategies, using of post-its to record notes while reading, extensive writing, applying critical thinking

skills to strengthen comprehension of texts, and creating meaningful work products aligned to the curricular, common core, State standards and C-PAS.

- The school strategically utilizes resources and makes organizational decisions aligned to its theme and instructional goals. (1.3)
  - School leaders have made strategic decisions around budgeting, programming, and hiring in response to the school and student performance data such as credit accumulation, Regents' exams, College Readiness Performance Assessment System (CPAS) and Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) assessment results. The school uses Title I to hire full time teacher assistants via the schools partnership with Blue Engine, thereby, decreasing student-teacher ratio in English and math classes. As a result, 70% of students increased their reading level as measured by DRP. Through the school based option vote, teacher teams are scheduled to meet two to three hours weekly in varied configurations, thus allowing grade teams to meet minimally 90 minutes two times per week. Teachers use this time for common planning, to analyze student work, and assess item analysis data. As a result they are able to align instruction to meet students' learning needs as evidenced via teacher team meetings and student work products.
- Grading policies and assessment tools enable school leaders and teachers to capture data and track and monitor student progress and mastery performance to make decisions and the school and classroom level. (2.3)
  - The school uses an online grading system *Jumprope* to communicate internally and externally academic performance and youth development information to identify and monitor performance trends, with a special focus on mastery towards learning targets within subgroups, including English language learners and students with disabilities. Additionally, Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) and College Readiness Performance Assessment System (CPAS), administered three times yearly, are aligned to Common Core and State standards and used to capture data and assess student performance, and to flexibly group students and target areas of weakness. As a result timely programming decisions to meet students' needs and modification of lessons, units, and projects, have increased reading levels of 70% of students as measured by DRP, The average student increased his/her reading score by approximately one grade level, including 80% of incoming ninth grade students who entered the school four more grade levels behind.
- School leaders and faculty compile and implement short- and long-term school goals and action plans based on school data trails and that are focused on impacting instruction and student progress. (3.1)
  - The school's short- and long-term goals emerge from an extensive analysis of summative and formative tests results, along with attendance and behavioral data. Goals are rooted in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) and Principal's Performance Review (PPR) to improve student performance in reading comprehension, reading content-specific informational texts, to increase teacher capacity to plan and implement instruction around students' academic needs, and to increase

student time-on-task in literacy. Consequently, classrooms, student work and teacher planning are reflective of the school's focus on literacy. Additionally, the attendance team meets twice per week to plan and coordinate efforts with advisors and families. The parent coordinator and school secretary communicate daily with families while advisors communicate weekly with families via telephone, email, and text message. Thus, 60% of students maintained or increased their attendance rate from the previous year and student suspensions decreased during the first five months of the school year.

- School leaders use a research-based rubric to support and provide teachers with differentiated feedback aligned to the school's instructional goals and academic needs of the students. (4.1)
  - The administrative team uses a research-based rubric to conduct weekly mini-observations of teachers and give frequent and immediate feedback on how to plan and adjust instruction to effectively engage and meet the academic needs of all learners. Furthermore, in addition to new teacher mentors, each teacher is assigned a coach thus allowing for differentiated professional development. As a result, administrators are able to monitor individual teacher growth toward meeting individual goals and school goals as outlined in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) and Principal Performance Review (PPR). Administrative leaders have a firm understanding of where each teacher is in their professional growth, and frequently communicate feedback and next steps rooted in Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* via weekly mini observations and monthly formal observations.

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

- Strengthen and align instructional practices to State assessments to positively impact student outcomes. (2.2)
  - Instructional shifts are emerging in the areas of questioning and diagnostics aligned to State assessments as evidenced via observation reports and end-of-unit assessments. School administrators and teachers consistently use summative and formative data to analyze student performance trends and adjust curricular aligned to Common Core and State standards. However, the school has not refined its data analysis of State assessments to sufficiently impact student performance and increase student self-assessment opportunities, therefore missing out on creating an awareness of next steps to further leverage modification of instructional design for individual students and subgroups.
- Enhance practices and further develop structures to increase family engagement and include them in school decision-making and school activities. (2.4)
  - Families and students are pleased with the school and are actively involved on the school leadership team and the parent teacher association. Further, advisors frequently contact families to provide them with academic and attendance updates. However, students and parents expressed confusion regarding promotion criteria and graduation requirements, and articulated that "learning targets give a clear indication

of what students know or don't know" but do not provide quantifiable or measurable progress data, thus hindering families from tracking their children's progress in specific classes to support their next steps for growth.

- Further develop and implement strategies and programs to create a respectful school culture and tone. (1.4)
  - Students and parents express that faculty and staff goes above and beyond to support students academically. Further, the school has a mentoring program for ninth graders, advisories on each grade level, and recently established a collaboration with RAMAPO to provide ongoing training for teachers and deans to address disciplinary issues and build healthy student-adult relationships. Thus, some strategies for resolving disciplinary issues and emotionally challenging situations are present. However, the school inconsistently enforces disciplinary policies and the implementation of social-emotional systems, thus hindering long-term sustained positive behavior for students.
- Expand the use of evaluating the effectiveness of team collaborations to build capacity and leadership development opportunities. (5.4)
  - Teacher teams frequently meet for a blocked period of time and a collaborative transparent school culture exists around inquiry work and professional development. However, systems and structures to identify, develop, and incorporate teacher leaders and teacher voice are not yet in place to support and develop distributive leadership among teacher leaders or to monitor and evaluate team level decisions.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: ?	UD	D	P	WD
<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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			<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>	UD	D	P	WD
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, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?		<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>	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?			<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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			<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, guidance/advisement 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, with particular attention to the CCLS?			<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>