

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Urban Assembly School for Wildlife Conservation**

**Middle School 372**

**2024 Mohegan Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10467**

**Principal: Mark Ossenheimer**

**Dates of review: December 14-15, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Lori Bennett**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Urban Assembly School for Wildlife Conservation is a Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school with 324 students from grade 6 through grade 9. The school population comprises 23% Black, 65% Hispanic, 4% White, 5% Asian students and 2% other students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 92.3%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Administration reviews a wide range of data in order to create a clear list of focused goals to accelerate student progress and close the achievement gap. (3.1)
  - The school improvement documents and the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) are aligned and clearly delineate the goals to improve student performance and progress across all subject areas. Based on a comprehensive review of data, such as NYS exam results, interim assessment results and teacher performance data, survey results, NYC and NYS report card data, the school has identified areas of focus. These areas reflected in the school's instructional and organizational goals. These goals drive the schools efforts to improve outcomes for all students.
- Students' personal and academic growth is a result of a supportive and mutually respectful learning environment. (1.4)
  - Administration integrates Habits of Hearts and Mind, which addresses the academic and social-emotional dispositions needed to be successful, into the school's advisory and academics programs. The school explicitly trains students on appropriate conduct through advisory classes that focus on positive life habits and conflict resolution skills. In addition, advisors are charged with monitoring the academic and social emotional progress of students and establish supports and interventions, as needed. Furthermore, staff members are regularly recognized for their contributions with the school- wide recognition mantra known as the "wolf howl" and appreciate the constant support of the building administrators. Staff members voluntarily meet and work with students before and afterschool to provide additional academic supports. These practices ensure that students respect and value each other's learning needs and know how to address conflict when they arise, thus creating a safe and respectful learning environment.
- The school leader makes strategic organizational decisions to support the schools instructional goals and to meet the academic needs of the students. (1.3)
  - The school has made a huge investment in technology, personnel and learning structures. For example, all teachers are scheduled for weekly grade-level and departmental common planning time enabling them to discuss pedagogical practices and examine student work. Two assistant principals, each a key member of teacher teams, at the middle and high school level to design academic tasks for the most struggling students. In addition, teachers have interactive technology devices in their classrooms in order to engage core groups of students. Furthermore, student schedules have been re-structured in the middle and high school in order to increase instructional time in all subject areas ensuring sufficient time to adequately cover content and address individual needs. These

practices and structures align with school goals and promote overall growth, as evidenced by increases in student writing.

- Effective partnerships and strong community links support students' personal and academic growth. (4.4)
  - The school's partnership with Turnaround for Children (Turnaround), and organization that supports public schools in healthy intellectual, social and academic environments, provides teachers and staff with professional development that assists all teachers with behavior management strategies to support students with academic and behavioral challenges. A committee meets weekly comprised of teachers, administrators and Turnaround staff to identify ways to incorporate the school's Habits of Hearts and Mind into the classroom routines. Parents are provided training on the college process and ways they can help their children learn about and meet the requirements for various colleges. In addition, in partnership with Turnaround for Children, students are made aware of the significance of key indicators on their academic transcript and are taught how to address negative behaviors. As a result of this partnership and these trainings, there has been an increase in attendance, lower incident rates, less off task behaviors and increased engagement in instruction.
- Administration and staff use tools to identify trends and patterns in student performance in order to make instructional decisions. (2.3)
  - School leaders and teachers use charts and templates to gather and organize student and school data. Teachers confer with students and gather and organize responses. School leaders gather and organize student performance data on class tests, attendance and state exams. This enables administration and teachers to determine trends in student performance, thus allowing them to make meaningful organization, curricular and instructional decisions.

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

- Ensure that the standards-based curriculum implemented includes rigorous academic tasks that engage all students along the continuum of learning. (1.1)
  - While teachers collaboratively design curriculum in departments and grade level teams, that engage and challenge students, academic tasks do not consistently reflect higher order thinking skills for English language learners and students with disabilities. In addition, data from the analysis of student work is not yet being used to refine academic such that learning experiences appropriately engages struggling and high performing students. Consequently, students on a continuum of learning do not yet benefit from learning tasks that appropriately challenges and engages them in order to accelerate learning.
- Deepen differentiation of instruction so that all lessons engage students and offer suitable challenge at their level, including effective questioning that elicits higher-order thinking and extends learning. (1.2)

- While the school ascribes the guiding principles embedded in Habits of Heart and Mind and the practice of differentiating instruction, teaching and questioning strategies inconsistently aligned with this focus. In some classes visited, teachers engaged students in high levels of questioning, while in several other classrooms and review of student work did not show this practice as consistent. This limits all students from engaging in learning experiences that push their thinking, thus reducing the range of entry points into the curriculum for all learners.
- Ensure that teachers analyze summative and formative assessments that align to each other, provide granular information on students' strengths and weaknesses, in order to evaluate instructional and curricular decisions.(2.2)
  - Teachers review formative and summative assessments, such as NYS exam results, conferencing notes and teacher-created tests. This information is used to determine what students know and don't know. However, there is loose alignment between the school's chosen instructional focus and the pedagogical decisions made by teachers. While students are assessed using the school's consortium benchmark assessment twice a year, however, it is unclear if those assessments are aligned to the school's chosen instructional focus or the curriculum map. In addition, teacher created interim assessments do not yet fully align to the benchmark assessments and do not provide granular information on the strengths and weaknesses of student performance. This limits teachers' understanding of the impact of curricular and instructional decisions, thus impeding their ability to design lessons that accelerate learning form key groups of students.
- Strengthen the practice of using informal teacher observations to reflect clearly articulate teachers' strengths and weaknesses that is used to inform professional development that result in elevated teacher practice. (4.1)
  - School leaders have begun to engage in frequent informal class visits using a research-based framework. While teacher receive timely feedback from these informal visits, the feedback does not yet speak specifically to strengths and weaknesses in teachers instructional practices. In addition, these frequent observations are not yet used to inform professional development offerings. This limits teacher from truly understanding what their strengths and weaknesses are relative to chosen school competencies, and participating in training that enable them from reaching their next steps, thus impeding teacher growth.
- Ensure that systems for evaluating progress towards school-wide and teacher team goals in order to measure improvements and make modifications to increase learning for all students. (5.3)
  - The Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) identifies goals for student improvement which incorporate the citywide instructional expectations and includes action plans for meeting said goals. In addition, teacher teams have goals that guild their work. However, the system to determine the progress made towards meeting these goals, at both the teacher team and administrative levels, is not in place. As a result, administrators

and teachers are unable to determine where improvements in plans or strategies to meet the goals are needed and cannot make adjustments to the resources and supports needed to promote increased progress for all students.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name: Urban Assembly School for Wildlife Conservation</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Middle School 372</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 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>	<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, 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>	<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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?		<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, 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>				
<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, 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>