



**Department of
Education**

Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor

**Quality Review: Quality Review Report
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2012-13**

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Urban Assembly School for Law and Justice

High School 13K483

**283 ADAMS STREET
BROOKLYN
NY 11201**

Principal: SHANNON CURRAN

**Dates of review: Dec 17-18, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Karen Watts**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Urban Assembly School for Law and Justice is a high school with 450 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 79% Black, 17% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 1.0% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 40% of the students enrolled and girls account for 60%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

What the school does well

- The school's comprehensive common core aligned curriculum engages students in rigorous academic tasks that develop students' higher order skills and promote college and career readiness in all grades. (1.1)
 - The school successfully addresses the needs of its diverse population of students who range in proficiency levels. For example in English, the school offers Wilson reading for the low proficient students through Advanced Placement (AP) English for the high proficient students. As most students enrolled have already taken the Integrated Algebra I course and passed the Regents exam, the school offers Geometry starting in the ninth grade. It also offers forensic science to engage students in the law and justice theme and a double period of English to infuse the theme there as well. US History and Constitutional Law Class are offered in tenth grade. Eleventh and twelfth grade students are enrolled in AP courses such as English, Microeconomics and Environmental Science as well as City College of New York (CUNY)'s College Now courses, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) Preparation, CUNY Placement Test Prep and CUNY at Home Program for students in the 65% to 85% range. Students take Research Writing where they are able to access databases at the Brooklyn Public Library throughout the course and World Literature with Global Studies. The school's curriculum is further enhanced by the many pre-college programs that students attend throughout high school at various colleges in the Northeast United States to ensure that they have exposure to college life and the level of work that is expected at college. The school uses the David Conley Key Cognitive Strategies to guide the development of curriculum and academic tasks through a Law and Justice thematic lens and alignment to the Common Core. Students take the College-readiness Performance Assessment System (C-PAS) assessments that provide information that teachers use to refine the curricula and academic tasks. Additionally, in grade teams, teachers use the individual education plan (IEP) goals of students with disabilities (SWD) to modify their lessons to meet the needs of 13% of the school's population are in the Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classrooms and the District 75 students. The teachers include Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies in their curriculum maps to ensure that they are cognitively engaging all students leading to strong students' academic achievement that resulted in the school receiving an overall A grade on its 2012 Progress Report and many students being accepted to competitive colleges.
- The administration skillfully aligns staff and student time and highly effective partnerships to the school's instructional goals so that instruction improves and students' academic outcomes increase. (1.3)
 - The school's founding partner, Manhattan-based law firm Cravath, Swaine and Moore, LLP provides financial supports, goods and services to the school. It provides space for teachers to plan and it hosts numerous events for the school. It provides a brother to brother mentoring program where lawyers are mentors for the students at the school. Students are invited to Lunch with Lawyers at the firm. Additionally, the Redhook Community Justice Center invites students to serve at its Youth Court and helped start a Youth Court in the school. The Institute of Justice Internships provides opportunities for the students to be exposed to the work of lawyers. Brooklyn Law School provides a program where law students come to the school to provide workshops for the students. The school has over 40 other partners that provide services ranging from the Arts and exposure to the courts

nearby the school to trips to museums around the city and even internationally. Additionally, the school invests in master teachers who work with new and struggling teachers to provide support. The principal has provided space that includes student work stations that can be used for the special education program pull outs or for advisories, etc. She has invested in a technology elective for 10th graders so that they can take their work to the next level of completing all assignments electronically. She provides time for teachers to plan in subject teams and to have kid talks in grade teams. These practices have aligned the schools resources to its law and justice theme and to its instructional goals so that the students' academic achievement increases. Students graduate with ten credits beyond the New York State requirements for graduation and the school has a 92% retention rate of students attending college because the students are well prepared for college upon graduation.

- The school provides effective youth development and guidance supports to develop well rounded students resulting in a positive learning environment and inclusive culture of high expectations leading to students' academic success. (1.4)
 - Students benefit from attending advisories twice daily where they discuss announcements, check dress code compliance and can print out homework assignments if necessary. In addition, the school provides students with planners and opportunities to go to study halls. The school's approach to discipline has changed over the years going from infractions resulting in detention or suspension and being placed on the ineligible list for extracurricular activities to an opportunity for students to participate in a restorative process after an infraction where they meet with their parents, advisors and teachers to resolve the underlying reasons for the infraction so that the student can be smoothly re-incorporated back into the school community without further negative behaviors. Students who violate the discipline code are also sent to students' led Youth Court where their cases are heard by peers and they abide by their judgment. The strong student council held a week of anti-bullying events to ensure that students were aware of all forms of bullying and how to prevent them from taking place and plan Spirit Week during which the school holds a home coming each year where the alumni return to speak to the students about their experiences in college. Additionally students attend many afterschool activities such as tutoring if needed, or participation in enrichment activities that rival offerings at elite private schools and include music, art, chess and a variety of performances which provide students with opportunities to build relationships with each other outside of the classroom. Students have access to social workers, guidance counselors and college and career advisors who all work to ensure that students leave with a solid plan for postsecondary success.
- Teachers analyze the results of common assessments to inform instructional decisions at the classroom level resulting in mastery for all learners. (2.2)
 - The school uses a standards-based grading policy and students' grades are posted on Skedula, the online grading book, so that students and parents can have easy access to students' progress, performance and feedback from teachers. The philosophy at the school around grading centers on grades as depicting students' progress towards reaching common core standards versus just numbers. Students are graded on participation in class, on mini-assessments and on major assessments and students are given multiple opportunities to improve to reach mastery of the standards. Students use rubrics to assess their own work and that of their peers. Work is never turned in for teacher review unless it was first peer-reviewed. Teachers administer both Regents style assessments as well as the CPAS in all four core subject areas. The CPAS assess students' development of

the Key Cognitive Strategies. The teachers use rubrics across content areas that contain a common language so students are clear about expectations and about the more descriptive and qualitative feedback they receive. There are also standard rubrics for grading labs in all sciences. These assessment practices have provided feedback to both teachers and students so that teachers can make instructional adjustments to meet students' learning needs and students can use the feedback to work toward mastery leading to high academic outcomes.

- Teachers benefit from participation on many collaborative teams where they analyze student work to adjust their instructional practice and increase students' achievement (4.2)
 - The instructional assistant principal works closely with the teacher leader of each collaborative team to ensure that each team of teachers understands what instruction looks like at the School for Law and Justice, meaning that it is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and to the Common Core Standards. There are structures in place to manage change effectively and to help teachers' practice get better. Teachers are open to new ways of delivering instruction and are supported as they engage with strategies that are out of their comfort zone as the school strongly believes in the use of coaching to improve teacher practice. The common core fellows and teacher leaders push teachers to new places in their practice on a continuous basis. Teachers who co-teach plan together. When teachers look at student work they ask questions such as: what was the task? where is the student work in tune with the task?, where are the discrepancies?, what else should this student be able to show evidence of?, and what are the implications for instruction grade-wide and department-wide? These questions allow teachers to reflect on their instructional practice, how it has benefited students or not and decide what changes must be made to better meet the needs of the students resulting in more effective instruction and better students' academic achievement.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to work on questioning techniques and discussion protocols to improve students' work products and classroom discussions to increase mastery of the curriculum by all students. (1.2)
 - Students are encouraged to read and analyze complex text including Supreme Court cases and the US Constitution, discuss and debate matters of the law and write using evidence from those texts. In addition, students are taught experiential learning, group strategies and to read and think so that they can participate in Socratic seminars, Moot Court and Mock Trial. The school began using the Danielson Framework for Teaching to guide their instructional practice and is focusing on designing coherent curriculum, questioning techniques and assessment practices. However, the skillful use of open ended questions to support critical thinking and protocols that would allow for deep student to student discussions so that students can develop rigorous academic habits is not yet an embedded practice limiting movement of all students including SWDs to mastery of the curriculum and negatively affecting post-secondary readiness of some students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Urban Assembly School for Law and Justice	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score				X			
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?				X			
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			X				
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?				X			
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?				X			
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?				X			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?				X			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed