

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Urban Assembly Institute of Math and Science for Young
Women

Middle-High School 527

283 ADAMS STREET
BROOKLYN
NY, 11201

Principal: Kiri Soares

Dates of review: April 8 - 9, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Karen Watts

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Urban Assembly Institute of Math and Science for Young Women is a middle-high school with 469 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 79% Black, 12% Hispanic, 3% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 13% special education students. Girls account for 100% of the students enrolled. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school uses the Learning Cultures (LC) curriculum that is aligned to the Common Core and New York State learning standards and engages students in rigorous academic tasks to promote college and career readiness. (1.1)
 - The school uses the researched based LC curriculum that is aligned to the Common Core and New York State standards and has identified the reading of informational text; evidence based argumentative, informative, and narrative writing, and vocabulary development, as the key standards to focus on school wide. The school is also focusing on math modeling and the standards of math practice in the math classes. Teachers develop unit arcs that direct students to activities for learning that students complete throughout the units. These activities, linked to the standards, also incorporate resources in the classroom that students access to support their learning. The school also provides a variety of courses that expose the students to college level work in math and the sciences. These curricula help students develop the critical thinking skills and academic habits that close the achievement gap and promote college readiness as evidenced in the 23% increase in students' reading levels from September 2012 to February 2013 as measured by the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) assessment.
- The co-principals strategically leverage the school's resources including long standing partnerships to provide both academic and youth development supports and enhancements to improve students' academic achievement. (1.3)
 - The school's founding partners, Girls Incorporated of New York City and the Children's Aid Society provide numerous resources for students that range from clubs in the arts, sports, debate, and robotics, to workshops on sex education, financial literacy, and college awareness and planning in order to support the school's theme of educating strong, smart and bold young women. The school also has a partnership with Polytechnic Institute of New York University, which offers college courses to eleventh and twelfth graders in math and the sciences, and with CUNY's City Tech that provides access to College Now courses in the humanities, thus promoting readiness for success in college and beyond. Additionally, teacher time is structured to allow for subject area and grade level teacher collaborative teams to meet at least weekly to share best practices and review student work to improve instruction. Student time is also structured to allow them to participate in a variety of after-school activities such as academic skills building centers that provide the academic supports needed to improve student achievement.
- The school's guidance and advisory structures address the social-emotional needs of the girls resulting in their development of positive academic and personal behaviors. (1.4)
 - The Children's Aid Society's Carrera Academy provides six social workers to support all aspects of the girls' lives in and out of school. The program provides resources that range from braces and eyeglasses to daily individual guidance supports if necessary. Additionally the school has a guidance counselor and college advisor who work closely with the social workers to ensure that the students' social and emotional needs are addressed and that they are making adequate progress in their classes. The girls are also assigned to another staff member who takes on the role of advisor and who works closely with the students' social workers, guidance

counselor, teachers, and family, to ensure that all students are fully supported to grow both academically and socially, and that parents and students receive timely feedback regarding students' progress, thereby promoting the development of students' academic and personal behaviors and their academic success.

- Teachers use the results from common assessments of key literacy standards and from ongoing students' self-assessments to adjust curriculum and instruction to meet students' learning needs and improve their academic success. (2.2)
 - The LC curricula with its various lesson formats give consistent tools for students to self-assess and teachers to assess students' progress during individual lessons and during the units of study. Students solve problems, write essays, and perform academic tasks during each unit as well as take unit exams, biweekly quizzes, bi-weekly performance tasks, midterm and final exams aligned to State exams and the DRPs. Students use rubrics to help them complete their activities for learning during independent work time (IWT) and to help them improve their work. Teachers use opportunities during the IWT to hold learning conferences with students to isolate areas of challenge needing further attention. Teachers use school wide literacy rubrics to grade students' work to assess students' progress towards achievement of the school's identified key standards and to determine what adjustments to make to their instruction to ensure progress towards achieving the standards.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the implementation of the various lesson formats of the LC framework for teaching to further improve students' academic outcomes. (1.2)
 - The LC framework supports the school's belief in student autonomy, access, and choice of academic activities and assessments whether written, performance based or project/portfolio based, in order to assist the students in learning the skills and content to achieve the learning standards and become college ready. Within the LC framework, instruction is delivered using a variety of lesson formats that included mini/grassroots lessons, IWT, learning conferences, unison reading, small learning groups and table and whole class discussions/shares. Teachers provide guidance to students in the weekly unit arcs so that students are able to use the classroom resources that may include websites, videos, books, instructional supplies, power point presentations with explanations, mentor texts with written explanation of the standards, mentor walls with step-by-step solutions to problems, exemplars, peers and teachers, along their independent path of learning. Students are encouraged to have productive struggle with the content, which provides multiple entry points into the curriculum, and to devise their own strategies to solve problems. However, the school is focusing heavily on what it has determined are the high leverage formats namely, the IWT with unison reading and learning conferences, and as a result the students are not yet receiving the full benefits of all of the other lesson formats, particularly the grassroots lessons, thereby limiting learning and academic outcomes. Additionally, teachers are also still struggling with the accumulation of and making available the correct resources for students for particular tasks and/ or with guiding students to select and use the appropriate resources in the classroom to meet their diverse learning needs.
- Expand professional development offerings to include continuing supports for teachers in the various content areas to improve their practice. (4.1)
 - The co-principals, coaches, and lead teachers, use the teacher observation guidelines from the LC framework to observe teacher practice during the

various lesson formats and to give targeted feedback to teachers. For example, during a round of observations of the IWT, they looked at students' moves, teachers' moves, the classroom environment, availability, and quality of resources, and students' time on task. They found that most teachers were implementing the formats but needed to adjust their practice to ensure the academic success of their students. This information was reported back to the teachers as a whole and to individual teachers who had opportunities to respond. The leaders and instructional coaches then designed in classroom professional development (PD) so for example the coach would model a learning conference in a teacher's classroom while other teachers observed and then allow for a debrief with all participants and follow up observations to see progress on implementing that format. However, the PD is provided for the formats on which the school is focused and primarily around literacy limiting the development of teacher practice in lesson formats that would help improve their effectiveness in other content areas such as science and social studies and for courses that end in Regent exams.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Urban Assembly Institute of Math and Science for Young Women	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