



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Urban Assembly School of Design & Construction

High School 300

**525 West 50th Street
Manhattan
NY 10019**

Principal: Matthew Willoughby

Dates of review: December 17 – 18, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Victoria Armas

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Urban Assembly School of Design & Construction is a high school with 418 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 32% Black, 59% Hispanic, 3% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 73% of the students enrolled and girls account for 27%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 86.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has created and refined curricula aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) that reflect the instructional shifts, fostering college and career readiness (1.1)
 - Curriculum camps, conducted over the summer months across content areas, allow staff to develop and reflect on units to promote school wide coherence in materials and tasks. Lessons and units are organized and aligned according to CC learning targets, and incorporate the instructional shifts including a staircase of complexity in social studies and science, deepening understanding of concepts in math, and a balance of informational and narrative non-fiction texts in English language arts (ELA) with a focus on close reading. Additionally, a design and construction theme is reflected in courses including studio art, design classes, and there are opportunities for students to present projects to experts in the field for feedback and support. Moreover, academic tasks are designed to be relevant to students' lives with real world applications that promote cognitive engagement, as well as college and career readiness (CCR).
 - School leaders and teacher teams review units to provide feedback in order to adjust and refine curriculum. Student work, including that of English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs), and data are reviewed during team meetings to inform strategic grouping and supports through tutoring and targeted interventions. Furthermore, students are provided with opportunities for choice within academic tasks across subject area content, which fosters engagement and student independence. In addition, Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) time two times a week supports sustained reading and improved literacy across all content areas.
- The school has established a safe and supportive culture aligned to student needs that is conducive to learning, effectively promoting positive academic and personal behaviors. (1.4)
 - The school promotes a philosophy that is inclusive and based on relationship building via Restorative Justice practices that endorse positive interactions among all constituents, include support for problem solving, and provide instructional guidance through the use of a common language, promoting an environment that supports progress toward the school's goals. Furthermore, to support the principal's statement, "There is youth development in everything we do", the school employs two youth development coordinators to assist in sustaining the culture of respectful attitudes and interactions. A student government association (SGA) includes three elected representatives from each grade and is active in supporting and building school culture by providing input into the guidelines for a professional school dress code, as well as planning event days to show awareness for social issues, while also regularly conferencing with the principal to socialize and share issues of concern. The school leadership team (SLT) also includes five students selected

through a democratic process thus allowing for meaningful involvement and student voice in guiding school improvement.

- Students engage in a weekly advisory program that follows a curriculum aligned to Restorative Justice concepts, and advisors loop with their small group of students year-to-year thus promoting a personalized approach to social-emotional learning and development. Students benefit from layers of support, which includes their advisor, academic counselor, and when suitable an English language learner (ELL) or students with disabilities (SWDs) coordinator. Additionally, the school's "overtime" program includes a variety of afterschool clubs and activities including anime and media clubs, tutoring, and campus-based sports that foster student interests and talents. Furthermore, attendance advocates monitor student attendance and target students who reflect a 70–85% attendance rate, resulting in an overall improvement of 5% in their attendance thus far this year.
- The school uses common assessments, rubrics, and performance tasks, to adjust instructional decisions and provide feedback on learning resulting in progress for students. (2.2)
 - Rubrics are regularly utilized by teachers and students, to evaluate student work and provide feedback regarding achievement. A variety of common assessments including Think Ready, which promotes independent research and college and career readiness, are administered four times each year in core subjects on all grade levels. Additionally, New York City (NYC) performance tasks are used as measures of student learning (MOSL) instruments for student baseline information as well as teacher effectiveness, and are collaboratively scored. Interim assessments and mock Regents are scored by teachers, providing reflections on student outcomes allowing staff to address trends and adjust curriculum and instruction. Furthermore, Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) assessments are administered to all grades three times each year, the results of which are utilized by teachers to determine literacy progress and formulate flexible student groups. The DEAR program that supports literacy development with DRP scores shows that, to date, increases in literacy levels exceed the national average by 34.7% in the tenth grade, and 43.9% in the eleventh grade when compared to the end of last year.
- School leaders have collaboratively formulated a coherent vision for school improvement that includes goals that focus on elevating students' learning and promote their social emotional growth. (3.1)
 - The school's goals include students earning credits through mastery with a 75% or better in every class, character development targets, and teacher effectiveness with a focus on Danielson Framework for Teaching, competency 3C, engaging students in learning, as well as an overarching goal to foster student independence. Data analysis conducted after every marking period monitors progress and identifies students who are off track in mastering learning targets in course work. Guidance counselors set goals to meet with those students in order to provide support, and enter notes on a Google.doc that are made accessible to all staff. Furthermore, individual teachers and teacher teams target students who

have not mastered learning targets and provide tutoring and alternate assessments in order to support successful course completion. This focused work has resulted in credit accumulation increases in all metrics of the school's Progress Report, the most significant of which is a gain for students in the lowest third earning ten or more credits in their second year, evidenced by an increment of 30.6% year-to-year from 2011-12 to 2012-13.

- Parents articulated that the school communicates with them and stated that the school “gets children to put their best foot forward”. Two school leadership teams (SLTs) that include representatives from all school stakeholders, including students, meet regularly to engage in decision-making. The SLT revised the mission statement and vision and communicated it to the community via a letter regarding the changes. Furthermore, a curriculum night held at the beginning of the school year, served as a forum for providing information about the school, its goals, and courses being offered, resulting in effective communication with families to gain their support for improvement plans.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance instructional practices across subject areas to strategically provide multiple entry points into curricula for diverse learners, leading to high levels of discussion and increased ownership of learning. (1.2)
 - Modeling was evident across all classrooms, coupled with the use of technology and the communication of clear learning targets. Furthermore, teachers foster student independence through several strategies including “Three Before Me”, that requires requests for support from three peers before asking the teacher, as well as the use of experience charts posted in classrooms. A newspaper developed to reflect a period of United States (US) history during the 1850's from the standpoint of a family during that time was created by collaborative groups of students, who supported one another during the process, reflecting engagement in a challenging task that demonstrated higher order thinking. Although classrooms provide multiple entry points for diverse learners primarily through flexible grouping based on literacy data, explicit modifications were not strategically articulated sufficiently to provide high-quality supports and extensions into the curricula so that all learners are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks, allowing access to learning at their level.
 - Student work products across classrooms were of high quality and showed evidence that opportunities were provided for choice within academic tasks across subject area content areas. A student in the senior class shared that she has always been motivated in her ELA class throughout her years at the school because she has been given choice during lessons, such as creating your own project with approval from the teacher, developing a skit, and/or creating a diorama, map, or vocal reading. Students also shared that there is some choice in selecting topics for Think Ready tasks, although this level of ownership was not apparent throughout tasks or classrooms. Furthermore, a Socratic seminar was conducted during a Forensics class promoting discussion and participation, however opportunities for discussion to promote student

thinking and participation were not evident across the vast majority of classrooms.

- Further the successful partnerships with families in order to support the school's high expectations to ensure students are prepared for the next level. (3.4)
 - High expectations are communicated to the school community through the mission and vision statement of the school. Additionally an advisory board consisting of 12 members from the private and public sector meets two times per year to support the school in guiding connections to college and career readiness through initiatives and fund raising activities including the Iron Designer Challenge. Furthermore, feedback that is provided regarding student progress toward goals through Pupil Path is accessible online to teachers, parents and students. In addition, the "Drop Everything and Call" initiative conducted by teachers provides positive feedback to families via telephone. Although the school communicates with families regarding academic progress, parents are not yet fully immersed in understanding all the curricula and expectations and requested opportunities for more workshops, including information about CCLS, CCR, the college application process, and how to effectively communicate and support teenagers. Thus systematic approaches to ensuring that partnerships with families are well established to support students' future endeavors are not yet fully developed.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Urban Assembly School of Design & Construction	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 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?			X				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the 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 supports 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 those expectations?			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 student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			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