



**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

The Urban Assembly School for Media Studies

High School 03M307

**122 Amsterdam Avenue
Manhattan
NY, NY 10023**

Principal: Cordelia Veve

**Dates of review: November 14-15, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Anthony R. Lodico**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Urban Assembly School for Media Studies is a high school with 369 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 37% Black, 57% Hispanic, 3% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 84.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

What the school does well

- The school has developed Common Core aligned curricula, academic tasks and unit plans which emphasize higher order thinking skills that foster improved academic performance for diverse learners. (1.1)
 - School leaders and teachers are immersed in research-based practices to support their work in assuring that units, lesson plans and academic tasks are aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and incorporating the instructional shifts. School-wide, there are four shifts that are expected across classrooms. These expected shifts are leading high-level text based discussions, a focus on process, argumentative writing and increasing text complexity. To support teacher capacity and build coherence, the faculty employs strategies based on their engagement in a faculty book study. Teachers' use of "Quick Thinks," annotating of text, purposeful grouping and exit slips are examples that are an outgrowth of their work and study. For example, in a grade 10 World Literature class students were working individually to prepare for group discussions and to prepare for their involvement in a whole class "teacher-less talk" session. These tasks and curricula that teachers employ coupled with purposeful scaffolding and groupings support all learners including English language learners and special education students thus ensuring rigorous habits and college and career readiness.

- The principal's effective programming, scheduling and organizational decisions support the school's goals to meet the learning needs of students and teachers. (1.3)
 - Teacher and student schedules are structured to ensure meaningful and strategic planning and use of time to support teacher development and enhance student learning. The principal has made an investment in teacher leaders, and has made administrative, instructional and school support hiring decisions to meet the goal of improving instructional practice. Teacher leaders meet weekly and work closely with the administrative team and will be meeting with the network instructional coaches throughout the school year. The teacher team leaders, along with the departmental and vertical grade teams have analyzed the results of Degrees of Reading Power (DRP), English language arts (ELA) Performance Tasks and New York City Performance Assessments. The ELA Common Core Performance Task Benchmark assessment was graded in grade teams. As a result of the findings on this assessment, there is a school wide focus on strengthening argumentative writing and students' ability to effectively address counterpoints in essays. The programming of all students for a literacy (E2) class has supported student growth and is an additional support reinforcing the writing that takes place in the core subjects. The school's schedule and programming allows for advisories to meet twice a day, for all students to have the additional literacy (E2) support class and for teacher teams to meet weekly. An investment in technology and the offering of advanced placement courses also enhances student achievement and promotes college and career readiness for all learners. As a result, student-to-student interaction, student writing and

assignments are consistent in the promotion of deeper thinking across disciplines.

- The principal has established and communicated clearly defined goals that are designed to accelerate student achievement. (3.1)
 - The principal has a succinct vision for school improvement that focuses on school-wide goals that are effectively tracked. Goals in relation to CCLS alignment, student literacy, attendance, and teacher effectiveness are clearly outlined in the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) and are communicated to the school community. Action plans and the work of teacher teams are aligned to these goals as well and are monitored for effectiveness. For example, the principal has worked to ensure that the improvement of literacy skills is at the forefront of the school's work. This work, driven by a data analysis of DRP scores, has ensured that all teachers have become teachers of literacy and reading as well as content specialists in their respective disciplines. All students, starting last school year, take an additional course called E2, a literacy based support and enrichment class. Teachers meet twice a month to plan for the E2 curriculum, lesson planning, and data analysis. Built into the course is an individual student conferencing component which teachers track, review, and plan next steps with students and families based on the DRP assessment results. Furthermore, the DRP growth is not only tracked and monitored, but it is also compared to Regents' scores and attendance rates. Common tasks seen across classrooms, directly related to teacher collaboration and classroom practice, are active reading, annotating of complex text, and argumentative writing. As a result, student work products are more rigorous.
- All teachers are involved in inquiry based professional collaborations that promote the development of teacher capacity and distributive leadership. (4.2)
 - All teachers meet in grade, departmental and E2 inquiry teams. In addition, the team leaders meet formally Wednesdays from 3:30 to 5:30 PM and informally as needed. Teacher leaders, along with the administration and network support team, are an integral part of the support, coaching and teacher development that permeates the school culture. As a result of the work in teams, teacher practice in content areas as well as the E2 classes focuses on strategies designed to increase student engagement and discussion, increase literacy skills and to ensure supports are targeting individual student needs. All teacher team members and teacher leaders described how the advisory E2 structure has fostered a greater sense of collaboration and coherency across the school. Furthermore, a focus on the incorporation of strategic implementation of formative assessment strategies has been an important part of the work in teacher teams. For example, "quick thinks," exit slips are used by many teachers to assess students and then adjust instruction as needed. It is through the work in teacher teams, coupled with the feedback that teachers are getting through classroom visits, that students are consistently engaged in CCLS aligned tasks and assignments thus improving practice and making progress toward goal attainment for all learners.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that teaching strategies and academic tasks are consistently meeting the needs of diverse learners and foster higher order thinking skills and meaningful student engagement across classrooms. (1.2)
 - In many classrooms strategies included those that would promote higher order thinking and tasks aimed at meeting the needs of all learners. Practices and strategies observed included the use of leveled texts, annotation of text, paired and group activities, student engagement in self-assessment and test correction, turn and talk activities, student development of questions, agendas, timed activities and the availability of translated materials when needed. In a chemistry class, students developed argumentative essays using a rubric. In a mathematics class, students focused on mathematical process and were expected to reflect on their solutions to problems and what the next steps would be. In a grade 10 English class, students were expected to annotate, engage in small group discussion, and be prepared to participate in a “teacher-less” talk Socratic seminar-type discussion. Although curriculum is rigorously designed and many tasks are geared to promote higher order thinking and student-to-student discussion, strategic support for English language learners, special education students, and low levels of engagement were observed in a few classrooms. For example, in a science class students were expected to complete a worksheet and students were asked to explain or share answers. Therefore, learning activities did not strategically engage all learners in monitoring their learning progress and process, thus hampering maximum progress for all students.
- Strengthen the use of assessment strategies to foster a consistent practice of making effective pedagogical adjustments that clearly delineate students' next learning steps. (2.2)
 - The school uses a variety of assessment data to drive pedagogical decisions and to also gauge individual student needs. The data from DRP assessments, performance tasks, Regents-based assessments, item analyses and checks for understanding are all used by teacher teams, individual teachers and school leaders to guide curricula revisions, lesson planning and development of tasks. For example, the DRP assessment results are analyzed by teacher teams and then used to guide student conferences, goal setting and instructional planning. Although teacher teams and the E2 structure fosters solid school practice in looking at planning for individual student need, it has not yet fully been integrated into all content areas and classrooms across the school. Furthermore, student feedback does not yet consistently assist all students in being able to demonstrate mastery and help them to be aware of their next learning steps for each discipline, thereby limiting opportunities to accelerate students' academic performance.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Urban Assembly School for Media Studies	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	