



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Urban Assembly New York Harbor School

High School M551

**10 South Street, Slip 7
Manhattan
NY 10004**

Principal: Edward Biedermann

**Dates of review: Apr 3, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Marisol Bradbury**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Urban Assembly New York Harbor School is a high school with 439 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 29% Black, 52% Hispanic, 15% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 63% of the students enrolled and girls account for 37%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 89.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and teachers align subject area and career and technical education curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards, emphasizing rigorous habits in order to promote college and career readiness. (1.1)
 - Teachers create units of study that emphasize content, the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), learning targets, technology, reading, and writing. The career and technical education (CTE) curriculum maps offer a cross walk between content standards and the CCLS. For example, in a grade 9 professional scuba diving class, students are expected to acquire and demonstrate skills necessary to obtain the open water diver certification while applying technological knowledge and skills to design, use and evaluate products and systems to satisfy human and environmental needs. Students read, analyze, and discuss non-fiction text, such as medical research journals. The Marine Systems Technology Programs of Study Modules curriculum includes boat handling, seamanship, woodworking, and field safety skills in order to take the New York State Safe Boating Certification. Students must also demonstrate knowledge in algebra, geometry and statistics to explain, problem solve, represent and interpret data. The Ocean Engineering curriculum includes the complexities of ocean engineering and skills to design and build a vehicle and develop a logical and convincing argument for determining the performance of the vehicle. In a grade 10 Recirculating Aquaculture Systems class, students learn the properties and chemical components of water and artificial seawater, nitrogen cycling, biological filtration, water quality testing, physical components of the New York Harbor and its anthropogenic effects while applying mathematical, scientific, and literary skills. In an Aquaculture class, students dissected a fish, acquired the knowledge and skills to identify and remove organs from the fish, while learning to care for and respect the marine life. These CTE courses have strategically integrated the instructional shifts into the curricula to incorporate literacy, technology, scientific research, and real world application that offer college and career readiness, these habits and higher order skills are embedded in a coherent way so that all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are able to demonstrate rigorous habits, such as high-level discussion skills and application of academic skills learned through the lens environmental stewardship.
- The principal's effective use of resources, partnerships, hiring and organizational decisions support the school's goals and provide students with learning opportunities that lead to college and career readiness. (1.3)
 - The principal has refocused all partnerships and funding to support the mission of the school to prepare students for college and careers through the restoration of the local marine environment. The school is located on Governors Island, allowing students to immediately apply their learning, knowledge and skills in a marine context. For example, students sail and learn to build and repair boats and water vehicles. Students grow and care for oysters in the laboratories, test the water conditions, and dive in the ocean to plant them. Thus, the principal believes that partners and friends of the school need to rally around the mission of the school. Their founding partner, the Billion Oyster Project, is a citywide multi-agency effort to improve the environmental conditions

of the New York Estuary through the marine education of New York City's students. Other partners include the New York Harbor Foundation, Urban Assembly, Grand Street and a large advisory committee comprised of 60 plus organizations unified around maritime education. The annual meeting with the partners provides an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum as it relates to the mission of the school and the foundation. These conversations provide a fresh insight into the curriculum design led by teachers who seek to obtain certification endorsement from New York State. The principal has structured additional instructional time to ensure students meet eligibility requirements for the CTE endorsement certificate. Additionally, the principal has equipped the school with much aligned technology; classrooms have Smart Boards, desktop and lap top computers. Labs and shops are equipped with marine technology, radar systems, communication devices, and GPS systems, allowing teachers to use technology to support the academic learning and expose students to real world technological application. In turn, students earn the required knowledge and skills to graduate with a New York State high school diploma and a Career Technology certificate. The school also earned an additional 4.32 out of a maximum 8 points towards the College and Career Readiness category of the Progress Report, indicating that the school helped students in high-need groups, including students in the lowest third, to meet the success criteria and move students with disabilities to less restrictive environments.

- The principal believes that organizational decisions need to be reflective and inclusive; together, the principals and members of the School Leadership Team (SLT) implemented a hiring committee and process to ensure students are taught by highly qualified educators who share the same instructional vision and belief of the school. Due to the uniqueness of the Harbor School program, members of the committee are always searching for experts in the field and industry partners. The committee has hired dynamic, innovative teachers who have joined the existing staff in taking on multitude responsibilities that include tutoring during extra help sessions, attendance outreach and advisement. In order to support instruction, the principal and SLT opted to decrease the student to teacher ratio so that teachers could offer more individualized support. The principal also hired an assistant principal to support him with the operational work so that he could become more focused on strengthening the instructional practice. As a result of these systems, nearly 1000 eighth grade students from across the five boroughs have applied to the school, interested in being a part of this unique learning opportunity. Moreover, the school earned additional credits by helping students with disabilities and Black/Hispanic males in the lowest third meet the success criteria with regard to the four year weighted diploma rate.
- Administrators and teachers use common assessments to structure academic support and create rubrics to provide actionable feedback to students, resulting in improved student performance. (2.2)
 - After reviewing the assessment tools used across classrooms, the principal provided teachers with “feedback criteria” reflecting alignment to the curriculum, demonstration of student mastery, and actionable and meaningful next steps for students. Rubrics are now used as formative and summative assessments that emphasize argument and analysis. In English classes, students use rubrics for drafting. In one class, students

are responsible for designing rubrics and editing their peers' work. Students stated that this process empowers them to be responsible for their own learning as well as the learning of their peers. In another English class, students receive feedback from both the teacher and a peer. Teacher and students stated that while the feedback and edits from the teacher are specific, the feedback from peers offers multiple perspectives on a topic or idea. Students stated that the drafting process and rubrics help them be clear about the expectations and the quality of work necessary to get a high grade while improving their work over time. Thus, the practice of using on-going assessment to provide actionable feedback as well as allowing students to design their assessments, creates opportunities to empower students to take ownership of their learning and become more independent learners.

- The administrators analyzed the breakdown of Regents exam scores and made programming changes to the math sequence so that grade 9 students would be programmed according to their academic needs and provide a stronger mathematical foundation. Teachers administer mock Regents exams in segments throughout the year to obtain a clear picture of student skills related to specific topics. For example, after administering the Global mock Regents exam, teachers learned that students needed to provide more textual evidence when developing the Document Based Question essay. One social studies teacher created a poster highlighting the skills students needed to improve. As students master the skills, the teacher updates the poster. Teachers also administer the Degree of Reading Power test to track student progress on literacy tasks, allowing teachers to regroup students and identify strategies to implement in class. The principal and his administrative team implemented an after school intervention program for ninth graders who scored below average. These strategies have helped teachers adjust their curricula and become more thoughtful about instructional decisions.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen teaching practices in order to consistently include more challenging tasks and opportunities for discussion so that all students can demonstrate and articulate higher order thinking skills. (1.2)
 - While teaching practices include a variety of strategies, including the use of activity sheets, Smart Boards, computers, lap tops, audio visuals, reading, and writing; questions and group activities vary across classrooms specific to high-level discussion and presentations. Exemplar practices were seen in a ninth grade English class, in which students were asked to use a combination of literary techniques and forms to convey a vivid picture about love. Students composed their own poem using six poems they had read and analyzed previously. Moreover, students were asked to choose at least one literary technique to include in the poem and were given a writing rubric to ensure they met the standards. In one Advanced Placement English class, students discussed the themes in Wuthering Heights. Some of the guiding questions asked students to reflect on the characters, their interactions, and how the details reflected the interests of the author. Throughout the conversations, students made connections to previous readings using textual evidence and made personal connections to the characters. Students agreed, disagreed, and elaborated on peers' comments. While the practices displayed in these two English classes offered students the

opportunities to analyze and critique complex text, create and design poems, apply knowledge, and make connections, there was limited evidence that this was the norm across the school. In some classrooms, the learning targets and questions asked students to defend and critique with limited opportunities to engage in discussion so that students could share and elaborate on each other's thinking. In other classrooms, students were asked to list, calculate, solve, compare, compute, draw, and graph, providing inconsistent opportunities for students to demonstrate high cognitive levels through classroom participation. While the CTE courses offered a more experiential, student-centered approach to learning that supported students with disabilities and English language learners, many of the activities prompted students to learn the skills and content but offered limited opportunities to apply the concepts to solve non-routine problems, articulate their thinking, engage in discussion, and hypothesize, thus limiting opportunities to promote critical thinking and support closing the achievement gap.

- Strengthen the teacher observation process to include student work in feedback to teachers, and use observation data to effectively design professional development and make informed decisions about staffing. (4.1)
 - To be sensitive to the concerns teachers had in regard to the new evaluation system, the principal offered a three-tiered support to develop their practice aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. During the fall term, the principal worked directly with teachers, including both new inexperienced teachers, on Domain 2: "The Classroom Environment" and during the fall on Domain 3: "Instruction". To help teachers become familiar with the ratings of the framework, the principal used videos from ARIS Learn to focus on Domains 2 and 3 during professional development days. Through their inquiry teams, teachers engage in intervisitation using the Danielson Framework as the lens for observation. The principal includes a "classroom environment checklist" in the observation report, and as part of the narrative he validates the efforts made by teachers in attempting to improve the practice aligned to domains 2 and 3 and encourages them to attend the professional development opportunities offered after school. However, these practices have not generated an effective professional development plan based on the needs of students and teachers. While the administrators gather low inference data, they have not used the analysis of student work to provide guidance to teachers to show the connection between curriculum, pedagogy, and student learning. While debriefing and norming the observation process is a good opportunity for adult learning, the administrators have not yet mastered a process to provide specific actionable feedback to teachers aligned to the academic needs of students. In addition, they are still developing a system to analyze the data gathered from the first cycle of observations so that they can make informed decisions about professional development opportunities and staffing. The school's current struggle to use student performance as well as teacher observation data to inform professional development opportunities is hindering pedagogical growth among the teaching staff.
- Continue developing a process to regularly evaluate and adjust instructional practice, the quality of teacher teamwork, and professional development so that teachers receive effective support. (5.1)
 - While the nationally recognized program offers invaluable opportunities for students to be college and career ready as they engage in the complex work of CTE that reflects the maritime abilities and skills, there

was limited evidence that the school evaluates the effectiveness of how the CCLS are embedded across the curricula in a coherent way across grades and disciplines that emphasizes the belief that students learn best when solving problems. While teachers design curricula and lessons, there were limited systems to evaluate teaching practices that reflect this belief, promote these behaviors, and offer lessons that emphasize high level discussion and complex engaging tasks so that all students, including students with disabilities, are cognitively engaged and have access to high quality instruction aligned to the CCLS.

- While administrators emphasize a very inclusive collaborative approach with members of the SLT, they have not managed to replicate a similar approach in other areas of the school. The principal and members of the SLT, who meet monthly and at the end of the year, evaluate the quality of school level decisions, including operations, budget, and instructional programs. This collaborative assessment approach has resulted in a coordinated effort to maximize the use of resources, including the creation of a small class size, which has resulted in more individualized student support. Across other areas of school, however, there were inconsistent processes put in place to support and evaluate the work of other teams. For example, the dynamic grade 9-team meets weekly to discuss a target group of students who struggle academically and emotionally. Together, these supportive colleagues have identified strategies to improve their practice and help individual students; however they have not yet identified patterns, trends or a systemic approach to support student learning across the grade. The social studies and CTE departments, while meeting on a weekly basis to share innovative ideas, are still in the early stages of designing an interdisciplinary unit of study. Administrators meet with the department coordinators and teacher leaders to disseminate academic priorities, thus limiting opportunities to develop their facilitation and leadership skills, reflect and evaluate the work of their teams. In addition, the administrators have not yet captured the professional development opportunities to strengthen the collective work of teachers and provide specific actionable feedback in order to maximize their valuable time and effort. This lack of administrative support has resulted in teachers being ill equipped to support students in mastering the CCLS.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Urban Assembly New York Harbor School	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