



**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 Science Academy

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 09X325

**1000 TELLER AVENUE
BRONX
NY, 10456**

Principal: PATRICK KELLY

**Dates of review: Jan 22-23, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Kristine Mustillo**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Urban Science Academy is a/an Junior High-Intermediate-Middle School with 381 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 30% Black, 68% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 33% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 91%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Instructional team uses collaborative and transparent processes for teacher observation that informs professional development and leads to strengthened staff capacity. (4.1)
 - The instructional team strategically organizes and monitors teacher observation cycles. The team meets weekly to review feedback and plan whole school, grade level and content area professional development. The team identifies teachers who would benefit from co-planning, co-teaching, modeling and/or inter-visitations. This information is tracked, shared, and discussed through Google docs. Subsequent team meetings and classrooms visits focus on the implementation of identified next steps from the prior support session. In addition, teams and individual teachers meet with instructional leaders to reflect on how the improved practice is influencing student work products. For example, teachers who are piloting Hochman along with planning and preparation work have seen improvements in the volume and organization of student writing.
 - Staff participates in professional goal setting in early fall. Formal and informal observation reports generated through the Advance system capture strengths and next steps for individual teachers based on goals and practice. The school utilizes a range of support models based on identified needs. Professional supports are implemented as a result of the conversations with administration around practice. Follow up conversations and classroom visits focus on assessing the effectiveness of the implementation of next steps. Progress towards instructional goals is evident across classrooms. Many English language arts teachers have incorporated the use of the Socratic seminar to increase student participation and engagement with content. In mathematics classes teachers are increasing multi-step problems and tiered tasks. Across contents, teachers are utilizing the results of teacher evaluations and professional development to plan for next steps.
- School leaders make effective organizational decisions, accessing and aligning resources to meet instructional goals. (1.3)
 - The principal prioritizes professional supports to teachers in order to support goals around strengthening teacher practice. The principal has allocated fiscal resources to retain two full time coaches in English Language Arts, two part time mathematics coaches, and Generation Ready consultants. A highly effective mathematics teacher has a part-time teaching, part-time coaching schedule to support effective mathematical practice. Teachers are also supported through the scheduling of common planning times by both grade and content in order to promote vertical coherence. The extended day block is utilized to promote a common understanding of the Danielson Framework for Teaching across the entire staff. The principal has expanded placement options for students through the opening of integrated co-teaching classrooms, and bilingual classes to support a steady stream of newcomers each year. Within the curricula, the school has adopted the Middle School Quality Initiative and Hochman Writing Program to build

student writing and vocabulary. This utilization of instructional and personnel resources to further teacher practice and student performance has led to an increase of student writing related to volume, improved organization in writing, and student engagement in Socratic seminars on historical perspective.

- The school tracks and monitors common assessments in mathematics and English language arts and has expanded the use of rubrics to improve curricula, instruction, and student progress. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams have created common assessments across grades and contents and have developed normed scoring through the development of rubrics. Baseline, mid-line and end-line assessments are used to measure student progress in writing. Based on student performance on state exams in English language arts and Mathematics, the school has adopted the Middle School Quality Initiative, Hochman Writing, and practices that support mathematical literacy and problem solving skills. The school has eliminated most multiple choice exams as teams felt they did not accurately capture what students know and are able to do. Teacher teams analyze assessments along with curricula units to ensure that what is taught matches what is asked and to ensure what is asked is in line with the instructional shifts. Teacher teams analyze student performance tasks and exams to identify next steps for groups of students. Reading, Writing and mathematics trackers shared on Google docs allow teacher teams to effectively discuss trends and implications for instruction. In addition, to support in classroom instruction, Pro-Quest is used at home and in school to provide students leveled resources based on their performance level.
- School leaders have established a culture of high expectations across the school through school-wide engagement around instructional and performance goals resulting in a shared accountability for success. (3.4)
 - School staff meets weekly, as a whole, around Danielson framework using on-line resources and in-school best practices. Videos and artifacts are discussed along with the framework to create a normed understanding. The instructional team also identifies places in the school where the practices are effectively occurring and sets up inter-visitations to share best practice as well as assign other supports to places where it is not. This process has created a system of understanding and shared accountability for effective practice.
 - Teacher teams meet weekly by both grade and content area to review Common Core aligned units of study along with instructional shifts. In teacher teams meetings, teachers discussed the “asks” of the exam against the content of the unit to modify the assessment. Special education and bilingual teachers participate in common planning and share strategies to meet the needs of a diverse population of learners. This communicates that the academic expectations are the same for all students. Students and their families are offered feedback on their academic progress through regular formative and summative assessment results shared through reports and conferring. Students receive support in academic behaviors and social emotional growth through teacher and guidance advisement that informs next steps. The school has established

a relationship with Counseling in the Schools to provide additional supports to students and families beyond mandated services.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the structures around lesson planning and task design, within Common Core aligned units of study, to ensure consistent application and access to cognitively engaging tasks for all learners. (1.1)
 - The school has Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned curricula in English language art and mathematics. Vertical team meetings support coherence and grade meetings support literacy integration in the content areas. There is evidence that in classrooms teachers use modified worksheets, front-loading, and tiered mathematics activities. Socratic seminars around historical perspective, *The Positive and Negative Effect of Industrialization* and *Andrew Carnegie: Hero or Villain*, were observed. Other classrooms provided less rigorous tasks. In one classroom students took a completed project with an extensive amount of writing on a selected topic, created an outline and converted the information in essay form. All students are provided access to curricula with attention to broad scaffolds to engage a diverse population of learners. English as a Second Language and special education teachers plan collaboratively with content area teachers to incorporate support strategies however plans do not yet focus on extensions for higher level students and supports are more general than strategic. The lack of consistency to which this is attended limits the cognitive engagement of all students.
- Expand the use of multiple entry points and extensions across classrooms to consistently engage all students in high level conversations and tasks resulting in the production of meaningful student work. (1.2)
 - Teaching practices are becoming increasingly aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The school believes that students learn best when they are cognitively engaged with rigorous content. Teachers use Socratic Seminar, vocabulary support, writing scaffolds, and tiered tasks to increase student engagement in English language arts and Mathematics. Sustained silent reading and conferring was also observed along with whole class computational mathematics practice. However, across classrooms, teachers do not yet use supports and extensions in a consistently strategic manner. The lack of consistency across classrooms leads to uneven student engagement and participation.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Urban Science Academy	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