

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Urban Assembly School for Wildlife Conservation

Secondary School X372

**2024 Mohegan Avenue
Bronx
NY 10460**

Principal: Mark Ossenheimer

**Dates of review: Nov 13 - 14, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Myrna Rodriguez**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Urban Assembly School for Wildlife Conservation is a secondary school with 463 students from 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 22% Black, 72% Hispanic, 3% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 19% 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 89.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school leaders and faculty align the curricula with the Citywide Instructional Expectations, focusing on college and career skills, which engage students in rigorous tasks and result in improved academic success. (1.1)
 - In alignment with the Citywide Instructional Expectations, students in the middle and high school grades across classrooms use non-fiction texts within all content areas and use evidence from texts when discussing in groups and in writing tasks. This results in the development of higher order thinking skills as students interact closely with non-fiction text and are engaged in discussions and writing using complicated content material and academic vocabulary. English language learners and students with disabilities are engaged in the same high-level tasks and discussions with any needed scaffolding provided, such as additional materials and small student groupings with teacher guidance, to ensure their entry into the same curricula and achievement as evidenced in student work and discussions. For example, 8th grade students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, worked on tasks from the Core Curriculum regarding the Industrial Revolution, with the expectations that English language learners and students with disabilities be supported with various strategies, such as individualized help from a teacher, visual cues using computers or laptops and deconstruction of text to ensure that students are engaged in the same curriculum and tasks. The leadership and faculty have a clear vision of what they expect their students, including English language learners and students with disabilities be able to do in order to be college and career ready. Because of this vision, student work products demonstrate deep interaction with content specific texts, and student discussions include advanced levels of academic vocabulary acquisition that demonstrate high levels of thinking, which are skills that the school purposefully targets to prepare all students for college and future careers.
- The leadership and faculty use the Danielson Framework to inform their curricula and pedagogy and have developed a belief system of how students learn best, which results in meeting the needs of diverse learners. (1.2)
 - The leadership and teachers believe that students learn best when teachers serve as facilitators and students are given opportunities to work with peers to independently construct their own learning. For example, in many classes there are various tools such as hand held calculators, laptops or computers to individualize instruction for diverse learners. Teachers group students and scaffold learning by providing additional or fragmented reading sources to improve comprehension of challenging text and to guide peer discussions. Across all classrooms teachers use the workshop model, whereby the teacher prepares students to engage with texts, or tasks within groups and individually which results in improved student collaboration and discussions ending with independent production of student writing. Teachers exhibit practices that reflect their beliefs about how students learn best as evidenced in lesson plans that specifically scaffold tasks as appropriate for diverse learners. Across classrooms teachers use varied entry points including scaffolded questions and appropriately challenging tasks, and students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, demonstrate high levels of thinking in discussions and work products.

- The school maintains an inclusive and positive learning environment that welcomes student voice, encourages mutual respect among all constituencies and supports high levels of student engagement and achievement. (1.4)
 - The school partners with a wide array of community-based organizations to engage students in various programs on- and off-site that promote social and academic improvements. The school has partnered with a community-based organization that has social workers working with teachers and students during school hours providing students with counseling and social behavioral supports. Group meetings on topics relevant to students, such as bereavement, family, gender issues and cyberbullying, have improved student behavior and engagement in school life as evidenced in the increased number of students attending after school academic and college and career programs. The school is strategically partnered with the Wildlife Conservation Society at the Bronx Zoo that promotes career and college readiness experiences. For example, all students attend science, conservation and career workshops at the Bronx Zoo throughout the year. Some experiences include hands on work with the animals from determining how much to feed the animals using scientific, mathematical and computer tools. Also, students learn about varied wildlife careers by meeting and working with the wide array of professionals engaged in wildlife preservation. The school has low incidents of behavioral problems as evident in their suspension data and the tone and climate in the classrooms, halls and student areas. As a result, students concur that the school supports their academic and social growth by the challenging tasks offered in classes, supports from their social workers, and the wide variety of extra and co-curricula activities, such as the photo pen-pal collaboration with a school in Uganda, students express strong belief that all adults care for their welfare and academic success which motivates them to improve academic and student behaviors.
- The school uses a wide array of common assessments, including on-going classroom, student and peer assessments, which result in improved teacher practices, student self-reflection and student achievement. (2.2)
 - Across all content areas teacher teams align unit and benchmark assessments and include performance-based questions to meet the Common Core Learning Standards and Regents goals. As a result, compared to last year, the data shows that a majority of students were able to respond to more performance based questions in the Living Environment and Integrated Algebra assessments, which resulted in a significant passing rate on these tests. In the middle school, benchmark assessments indicate an increase in reading levels, English and math, as well as in core subject unit exams, which result in improved student achievement. The school, teachers and teacher teams strategically use assessment data to provide feedback to students regarding their goals and next steps to meet them. Students reflect on their work and peer review using rubrics to guide their thinking and questions. This results in meaningful peer conversations and individualized self-assessment, which guides students to improve their work products.
 - Across classrooms, students are encouraged to self assess their work using rubrics developed with teachers and to peer review to ensure that students and teachers focus on the learning targets: what students will know and be able to do at the end of the lesson. Across classrooms teachers clearly outline what students are expected to know by the end of the lesson, and teachers monitor their learning throughout the lesson

with frequent checks for understanding using various strategies. Students are frequently prompted to check in with a partner or within a group to summarize learning, and best ways to do assigned tasks. Teachers in classes observed, including social studies and science monitor these conversations and make adjustments to their teaching, such as bringing the whole class together when they determined more direct instruction was needed before students could work in groups or independently. In a science class, the teacher realized students were having difficulty responding to questions assigned to each group because they had not clearly understood the relationship between mitosis and osmosis. The teacher adjusted his strategy and redirected students back to the text and class notes. As a result of these practices, in which teachers are purposefully monitoring what is learned, making targeted adjustments as needed to meet a variety of learners' needs, students are able to engage in their own learning. Students are encouraged to collaborate with peers to extend their understanding of what is being taught, resulting in improved work products and academic improvement.

What the school needs to improve

- Further strengthen efforts and practices to increase student attendance and engagement in both the middle and high school to ensure high levels of academic improvement, credit accumulation and graduation rates. (3.4)
 - The school's safety, tone and climate support the academic and personal growth of students and adults as professional development, family outreach and student learning experiences are developed to promote effective academic and personal behaviors. The school has made attendance a priority because, even though the middle school has increased attendance over the past three years, it is still not high enough to ensure increased student achievement. Student absences result in low student engagement, which impacts negatively on reading levels, assessment scores and state English language arts and math performance. The high school attendance rate is two percentage points lower than the middle school attendance rate, which impacts negatively on credit accumulation and Regents performance and graduation rate.
 - Teachers and staff consistently communicate high academic and behavioral expectations to students and families. However, the connection between attendance, high school graduation and college and career readiness is not clear to all constituents as evidenced in conversations with staff, parents and students. As a result, student achievement growth does not progress rapidly.
- Deepen the analysis and monitoring across all grades to ensure instructional delivery produces high levels of academic vocabulary acquisition and achievement for all students, including high achievers. (5.1)
 - The school leaders and faculty regularly evaluate and adjust curricular and instructional strategies based on assessment data. The school has various strategies for working with English language learners. However, the school does not strategically monitor teacher practices in teams and in classrooms to significantly increase the acquisition of academic vocabulary. This results in fewer opportunities for English language learners to be fully engaged, create improved student work products or increase their achievement.

- The school monitors academic data to make adjustments to curricula, professional development and school goals. However, there is not a process in place to regularly monitor, evaluate and adjust the quality of teacher work and professional development being offered with attention to what teachers need to learn to support high achievers. The high school curricula and after school programs, including college classes and career opportunities, positively impact high achievers. However, in the middle school, the school does not consistently analyze and monitor individual teachers to address how they differentiate their lessons, tasks and projects for high achievers. Opportunities to address this need through monitoring professional development are not strategically addressed to ensure that the curricula and teacher pedagogy address the needs of high achievers, offering opportunities to deepen their knowledge to increase student achievement. As a result, opportunities for extended engagement with the curricula, which would significantly increase student achievement for this subgroup, are limited in some classrooms.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Urban Assembly School for Wildlife Conservation	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	