



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

**Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning**

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Urban Assembly High School of Music and Art**

**High School K350**

**49 Flatbush Avenue Extension  
Brooklyn  
NY 11201**

**Principal: Paul Thompson**

**Dates of review: May 1, 2015  
Reviewer: Janice Ross**

## The School Context

Urban Assembly High School of Music and Art is a high school with 387 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 77% Black, 22% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 35% of the students enrolled and girls account for 65%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 was 80.8%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, including the instructional shifts. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

### Impact

Teacher collaboration strengthens the instructional capacity of teachers. Teachers have built leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- There are three types of team meetings at the school. Once a week, teachers meet by grade and analyze student work. Twice a week, the same team meets but focuses on curricula writing aligned to the five-week plan. Both of these meetings are facilitated by a grade team leader. In addition, once a week, content teams meet under the leadership of the department chair to set goals around student achievement and work to improve teacher practice.
- The principal, assistant principals and grade team leaders meet weekly to monitor the pulse of the building, students' academic progress, and the progress of the teacher team meetings. Currently, the cabinet is in the process of reviewing and revising the school's curricula plan to support the new online-based five week planning tool. The principal and assistant principals also meet weekly with the network instructional coach to create professional development around the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, embedding the instructional shifts, and to align the work of the cabinet and grade/content meetings.
- During the grade 11 teacher team meeting, teachers conducted a skills analysis of student work and planned to address the skills students had not yet mastered. Teachers followed a detailed student protocol where roles were assigned and each teacher played an integral role in the process. For example, teachers identified what students did well, what they needed to improve on and how they could revise the task or lesson plan to bridge the gap between the students who were able to master the task versus those who struggled.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and staff are developing expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all students.

### Impact

Communication systems are beginning to provide feedback to families regarding student progress toward meeting expectations. Guidance and advisement supports are developing the level of detail and clarity needed to help prepare students for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has implemented Jumprope, a web-based gradebook integrated with an attendance, behavior tracking and grading system which provides teachers, students, parents, and administrators, with access to real-time data so they can collaborate on student learning.
- Members of each grade team monitor their students' progress and identify students at risk. Although teachers meet to discuss student progress, the school is developing systems that provide targeted actionable feedback to families and students regarding student progress.
- There is a designated college counselor who provides students with personalized counseling pertaining to college and career readiness. There are push-in sessions for grades 9 through 11. Both parents and students agreed that the counselor had a measurable impact on the success of the student. A parent said, "Whenever I need something, I know who to go to". Students affirmed that the counselor's input has helped them in making choices around college and career. However, many students shared that they felt they didn't have a voice in school decisions, and wanted to see the school theme embedded in the school. Both students and parents expressed an interest in additional music and art offerings as some students stated that they had selected the school for the theme, but have not seen it come to fruition.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

### Impact

Purposeful decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Curricular refinements ensure that a diversity of learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities have access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal has created a GoogleDoc to support teachers in developing their unit plans. All subject teachers across grade levels worked together to create one project aligned to David Connelly's Five Key Cognitive Strategies (KCS) and the school's instructional focus by using the Project Outline document, and create lessons using the daily pacing calendar. Teachers collaboratively work together in department team meetings to review and revise curricula. For example, the grade 11 five-week unit plan shows how the English, math, science and social studies teams created interdisciplinary units by connecting human nature, foreign policy, rules of logic in geometry, and stoichiometry in the real world (for science). Students study these topics in their core classes and connections are established across content areas.
- Curricula maps demonstrate the use of David Connelly's Five Key Cognitive Strategies (KCS) which are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. The school currently has adapted a five week curricula plan where teachers create five week unit/project instruction models across subjects. Students are provided with multiple entry points through this project-based instruction. Each unit culminates in a project that requires students to demonstrate their mastery of the KCS standards. These projects are created with all learners in mind and provide differentiation, choice, appropriate scaffolding and use of a rubric assessment tool. For example, the grade 12 five-week unit plan provides students with a choice of writing a document based essay or creative short story.
- Lesson plans across content follow the workshop model where each lesson utilizes the format of KCS mini lesson focus, independent practice, share out and a deliverable. For example, all lesson plans reviewed, including United States History, Algebra 2/Trigonometry and Chemistry, followed this template and included a section for differentiation.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

### **Impact**

Coherence in teaching practices support student engagement in Common Core aligned tasks and class discussions.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Across classrooms, students were observed engaged in hands-on activities. In the English class, students participated in a Socratic Seminar around the differing views of human nature by Rousseau and Hobbes. They utilized a discussion protocol and a rubric to guide their academic discussion, and cited textual evidence. Students asked each other questions, and accountable talk posters were available as scaffolds. In the grade 9 English class, students worked on their short story writing on iPads, and the teacher used GoogleDocs to monitor their progress.
- Across classrooms, instruction supported the implementation of the instructional shifts. For example, in an Economics class, students shared research that they had conducted in support of their topic using task specific criteria. The project involved writing to a variety of sources, including articles from handbooks and websites. In the math classrooms, students practiced problems to master precision and accuracy on box plots.
- Across classrooms, teachers used student grouping to promote interaction and engagement, and implemented the Socratic Seminar protocol and turn and talk to promote whole group and student-to-student discussion.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### **Impact**

Assessment practices provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school utilizes the Jumprope standard based grading system that enables teachers to track individual student's rates of proficiency against learning outcomes. Students are rated high performance (HP), proficient (P), and not yet (NY). Student performance is assessed through projects, papers, tests, presentations, discussions and special assignments. All students are provided with rubrics, and have clear indicators for proficient and high performance expectations. During the student meeting, students discussed the use of Jumprope and how their parents log on to monitor their academic progress.
- In most classes, there was evidence of rubrics being used to assess students. For example, in an Economics class, students used a performance rubric to assess their classmates on their presentations. In an English class, students utilized a discussion rubric to self-assess.
- Across classrooms, there was a consistent display of checks for understanding, student assessment and actionable feedback that supported students in demonstrating proficiency or high performance in their learning outcomes. For example, in a grade 9 English lesson, students engaged in a peer review of each other's writing using Google classroom. This provided students with an opportunity to peer-assess and provide actionable feedback to each other. In an English class, students created their own questions and engaged in a Socratic Seminar, allowing students to evaluate each other's responses. Students used a discussion rubric as part of this process.