

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**Urban Assembly Institute of Math and Science for
Young Women**

Middle - High School K527

**283 Adams Street
Brooklyn
NY 11201**

Principal: Kiri Soares

**Date of review: December 8, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Karen Watts**

The School Context

Urban Assembly Institute of Math and Science for Young Women is a Middle – High school with 470 students from 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 74% Black, 15% Hispanic, 6% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 0% of the students enrolled and girls account for 100%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 was 92.1%.

School Quality Criteria

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

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

The school is implementing curriculum that is aligned to the Common Core, content, and college level standards that incorporate rigorous habits and higher order skills in academic tasks across grades and subjects that promote coherency.

Impact

All students including students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs) are supported in their development of college and career readiness skills and demonstrate their thinking in their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has been implementing Learning Cultures curriculum arcs aligned to Common Core and content standards for a number of years now and the curriculum is now school wide across all subjects. A review of curricular documents provided evidence of coherency of expectations across classrooms about how students learn best. Teachers are provided with the Learning Cultures template and Unit Arcs are created by looking at multiple resources.
- The unit arcs with flow charts and pacing calendars are carefully planned to align to the standards as well as include learning activities that promote student centered learning.
- The curriculum supports student agency in all academic tasks that develop higher order habits and promotes student ownership of their learning. Students track their own progress toward mastery.
- The SWD and ELL students are supported through the differentiation of activities, reading resources and level of support that they receive from group mates and their teacher. Structures are in place, such as student conferencing across all content areas, where each student meets with their teacher and discusses goals and academic progress.
- Students have access to college level courses such as AP Macro Economics, Statistics and English as well as college level courses Chemistry, Biology and Calculus at nearby NYU Poly. Grade 11 students participate in robotics and computer science courses through Girls Who Code.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

3.4 High Expectations

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for staff and students that are connected to pathways for college and career readiness and provide families with ongoing feedback to understand student progress towards those expectations.

Impact

The school has developed a culture of learning that is supported by a growth mindset where teachers and students are accountable for both progress and performance.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders keep families informed of the progress and performance of their children through frequent communication by newsletter, blog, website and Skedula, however, parents expressed that sometimes the communication is not timely.
- The school holds curriculum night at the start of the school year to share academic expectations with families. Parents expressed that they would like a greater focus on math, science and project-based instruction and more acceleration so the middle school students have access to the college level courses before high school graduation.
- Families are informed of the availability of academic intervention services at the student-led teacher parent conferences. Parents expressed a need for more advisory/guidance supports for struggling students.
- The school provides college awareness and guidance workshops so that students can successfully apply to the best colleges of their choice.
- The principal sends out a weekly blog to teachers indicating the school's important dates and other academic related information. The principal meets with students once a month, where students are given an opportunity to voice their opinions, and engage in school planning. The school holds monthly school events where students have the opportunity to foster their relationships with one another and the school staff.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across all classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curriculum and reflect the schools beliefs that students learn best when they have agency and choice. Teaching strategies across the vast majority of classrooms provide multiple entry points and high quality supports for all students.

Impact

All students are engaged and appropriately challenged resulting in higher order thinking skills evident in their discussions and written products.

Supporting Evidence

- The teachers provide clear expectations for student agency and choice through the Learning Cultures model of instructional delivery. Students select which learning activities to engage in from a number of equivalent choices based on their interest and reading levels. Students work autonomously to gather information about their individual inquiries by utilizing a number of resources before they approach the teacher for assistance. Students take accountability for their work products and process, as facilitated by the teacher, who creates this culture in each classroom. Students are trained to be independent and resourceful. Students discussed topics in their groups to promote academic conversation.
- Students are aware of their reading levels and which books to choose for independent reading because they are tested four times per year to determine their Degree of Reading Power (DRP). Their reading levels change through targeted instruction and the amount of independent reading time that students engage with in grades 6-12.
- Students thrive in a supportive learning environment where social emotional skills are part of the curriculum and lead to productive learning outcomes. Students self-regulate through collaboration and corporation with their peers.
- Students' use of technology addresses differentiation and use Google Docs for both school work and home work. To support this technology the school provides a Principal's weekly blog to teachers, monthly blog to students and parents, Google Docs, and an active school website.

Findings

The school's assessment practices are aligned to the curriculum and teachers and students use common assessments to determine students' progress towards standards.

Impact

Teachers and students use assessment results to provide actionable feedback to students on their progress and to adjust curriculum and instruction to better meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Students use data to track mastery of common core standards and help them create work out plans to implement during independent work time. In one classroom, students received their Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) scores and were asked to assess where they are now with respect to the September results in light of their acquisition of academic skills thus far. Subject area teacher teams meet weekly to develop benchmark assessments and common rubrics to use as evaluation tools by both teachers and students.
- At the school level, results on assessments such as the benchmarks, the DRPs, scholarship and Regents exams are used to identify cohorts of students in need of interventions or targeted strategies.
- Teachers and students check in on student learning by using the data from online and weekly quizzes, breach journals, unison and conference records and student work so that teachers can modify grassroots lessons, shares and learning groups.
- Teachers leverage the school's grading policies and assessment practices to give targeted and timely feedback with next steps to students to improve their performance. Students' self/peer assess against a rubrics, and monitor their own understanding and progress, either by taking initiative or as the result of a rigorous task set by the teacher. For example, one of the boards in the science class evidenced rigorous work, rubric, next step slips and task.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

All teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations and have leadership roles on the many teams and collaborative structures that exist at the school.

Impact

These strong collaborations have developed teacher leaders who are involved in decision making at the school as well as strengthened teachers' instructional capacity so that they deliver coherent and high quality instruction resulting in high academic achievement for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers participate in professional learning groups of 3-4 teachers called PD Pods. Teachers choose which groups they will join and what problems they will study. All groups are aligned to the Danielson framework. Teacher teams visit each other's classrooms and follow a detailed Danielson aligned rubric for them to evaluate one another. The principal meets with teachers approximately every six weeks to assess their goals and provides detailed support in alignment with the school's instructional goals.
- Grade teams composed of teachers of various subjects who teach the same students meet to focus specifically on their at risk students, also called Code Blue students, by designing intervention strategies that will address the needs of these students.
- Teachers also collaborate around the implementation of the Learning Cultures Model at the school. The lead LC teachers attend LC PD outside of the school and then turnkey that information to their teams at the school.
- The instruction cabinet composed of administrators, teacher team leaders, teacher coaches and partners meet regularly to look at data, problem solve and make key decisions to address the instructional needs of the school. The school utilizes Google docs where teachers and administrators can share comments about data analysis and teacher observations, therefore allowing for the monitoring of teacher goals, school goals and progress towards these goals.