



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**The Urban Assembly School
for Emergency Management**

High School M135

**411 Pearl Street
Manhattan
NY 10038**

Principal: Rodolfo Elizondo

**Date of review: May 11, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Vivian Orlen**

The School Context

The Urban Assembly School for Emergency Management is a high school with 187 students from grade 9 through grade 10. The school population comprises 29% Black, 62% Hispanic, 3% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 1% special education students. Boys account for 43% of the students enrolled and girls account for 57%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</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	Proficient
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	Focus	Developing
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	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks provide higher-order skills and are refined to provide curricula access for all learners.

Impact

Coherence in curricular planning aligned to the Common Core across grades and subject areas, and consistent emphasis on rigorous habits and higher-order skills promotes college and career readiness for all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has created templates for curriculum maps, unit plans and lesson plans that have been adopted by the vast majority of teachers. In addition, the school has developed a process for teachers, administrators along with their Urban Assembly network instructional specialists to review all teacher work products. The principal showed evidence of curriculum maps and lesson plans across content areas and grades that demonstrated alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards.
- The schools instructional focus on the implementation of school wide literacy practices were evident in lesson plans. For example, English language arts and science lesson plans illustrate how word walls and accountable talk stems are accessible for students and include modifications for teaching critical thinking skills.
- As a Career and Technical Education high school focused around emergency preparedness, the school ensures that all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities have the appropriate supports they need to be college and career ready. Common planning time provides an opportunity for both content and special educators to focus on lesson planning that consider the unique needs of these student populations. Modifications made for each specific student was evident in lesson plans reviewed.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and are beginning to reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best, informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts. Teachers inconsistently utilize effective questioning and discussion techniques.

Impact

Teachers' instructional practices provide uneven opportunities for students to engage in learner-centered lessons, create meaningful work products, and participate in high-level discourse.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal spoke to a focus on students analyzing text and citing evidence in their writing and speaking across content areas; however, these practices were inconsistent across the majority of classrooms visited. In an Emergency Management class, students were learning about the characteristics of levees. As they were reading text, teachers asked only for one-word answers. In a Living Environment class, all students read from guided notes and were not engaged in note taking or student-to-student discussion.
- Several students across classrooms could not articulate what they were learning and why it was important. In a science classroom, students were studying how climate change has altered natural ecosystems. The teacher was circulating around the room assisting various groups and when students asked the teacher questions, the teacher only answered the questions and moved on instead of redirecting the questions back to the group or to the rest of the class to promote student thinking and discussion.
- Students were working collaboratively across all classrooms visited; however, not all students, in some instances, actively engaged in the discussions within their groups. This prevented some students from articulating the work of the group and having a full understanding of the material being covered. In a math class, there was inconsistent engagement of individual students observed which did not allow for high levels of student participation.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across the majority of classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas. Assessment practices include varied opportunities for students to self-assess their learning.

Impact

The school's assessment practices provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Data analysis structures lead to adjustments in curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- The Degrees of Reading Power assessment is administered three times per year to measure the effect of students' ability to comprehend informational text. English teachers were able to use this data to inform what choice of texts students were matched with over the course of each marking period. During the student meeting, students shared the range of text choices they made and were able to discuss how the text choice was appropriate for their reading level.
- The English Language Performance Assessment is administered twice a year to 10th grade students and three times a year to 9th grade students, to measure students' argumentative writing abilities. Grade-level teacher teams use the data from the assessment in order to create targeted student groupings based on assessment results.
- Across classrooms, teachers' use of peer and self-assessment practices varied. In a math class, students worked in groups and then shared their individual work with a peer before sharing it with the entire class. In other classrooms visited, students worked together on similar problems, and had opportunities to self-assess their work or peer assess other student's work.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The principal consistently communicates high expectations aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to the entire staff. The principal has created opportunities and support through professional development, and has implemented a system of accountability for those expectations. School leaders and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

Systems of training and accountability support faculty and staff in meeting professional expectations. Guidance and advisement supports prepare students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- A parent shared how the school does an excellent job of informing them of all upcoming events and provides regular updates about their children’s academic progress. Teachers communicate with families regarding their child’s academic progress and remind them of upcoming exam dates. Parents have had the opportunity to learn more about the college planning process through workshops offered at the school.
- School has created a supportive and highly organized system of feedback for teachers. An instructional coach who helps support the development of curriculum aligned to learning targets supports all teachers. As detailed in the Coaches Handbook, coaching cycles are calendared and shared with teachers at the start of the school year allowing teachers to begin the school year setting goals based on the school wide instructional focus. These cycles of coaching support are built into their professional plans every semester.
- School leaders have a system to communicate and evaluate high expectations for staff around Danielson’s Framework Domain 1 Planning and Preparation. Administration reviewed Content teacher’s units using the lens of the Tristate Rubric. Units were evaluated using the Danielson Framework levels of highly effective, effective, proficient, and developing for each criterion within the Tristate Rubric. Each teacher was provided with next steps in regards to unit planning, based on the rubric reviews.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The majority of teachers engage in structured inquiry- based grade level and content area professional collaborations that promote the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards, instructional shifts, and align practice to the school’s instructional goals. A distributed leadership structure provides opportunities for teacher leadership.

Impact

Ongoing teacher collaborations strengthen teacher instructional practice. Teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher leaders spoke to how they meet regularly with the principal to discuss professional development connected to teacher practice and student achievement trends. The principal works closely with instructional coaches to ensure that teacher leaders are growing in their own capacity to help strengthen instructional practices across the core content areas.
- Teachers reported that they have a strong voice in school-wide instructional decisions and their leadership is not only supported but also actively sought after. As an Urban Assembly member school, teachers have opportunities to attend workshops focused around Common Core Learning Standards and Urban Assembly coaches support the curricular shifts on site over the course of the academic year and into the summer.
- Content area teachers collaborate closely with both special education teachers and the English as a Second Language teacher to ensure that students are receiving the supports they need to be successful. Principal creates teacher schedules that promote effective collaborative team teaching partnerships.