



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Urban Assembly Maker Academy

High School M282

**411 Pearl Street
Manhattan
NY 10038**

Principal: Mr. Luke Bauer

**Date of review: April 29, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Thomas McBryde Jr.**

The School Context

Urban Assembly Maker Academy is a high school with 104 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 25% Black, 47% Hispanic, 9% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 2% special education students. Boys account for 59% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.9%.

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 | Additional Findings | 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 | Developing |
| 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 | Focus | Developing |

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school leaders and faculty have worked to ensure that curricula is aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards while emphasizing higher order skills across grades and subjects.

Impact

Curricula are designed to build coherence which promotes rigorous habits as well as college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has elected to embed Common Core literacy standards in all subject areas. The r1, w1 and s&l 1 standards are three, which have been embedded into physics, Ela, health, and social studies, and making 101 this school year. Physics and mathematics teachers have been utilizing the standards of mathematical practice from the Common Core Learning Standards, specifically mp1, mp3 and mp4 about persevering, constructing viable arguments (aligned to r1 above) and modelling with mathematics. The school has a focus on design thinking and literacy. In literacy, all units focus on non-fiction texts, evidence based claims, and argumentation as evidenced in unit and lesson plans. In physics, there is a unit on energy with a focus on literacy argumentation and an interdisciplinary component provided through blog writing.
- The school's approach to integrating the instructional shifts and college and career readiness has been grounded in the implementation of various structures such as CTE focused on three pathways: Interaction Design, Physical Computing, and Digital Media. Interaction Design is the study of a user's experiences both in the digital and physical world. Physical Computing is an approach to computer-human interaction design that starts by considering how humans express themselves physically. Digital Media is the study of marketing and selling a product and includes a focus on storytelling. Students have the opportunity to learn content and skills in subject area challenge classes, whole school design challenges, and through asynchronous work that they complete at their own pace, allowing for acceleration or recuperation, depending on the student's need, thus, leading to a personalized experience for every student.
- Curricula and academic tasks promote higher order thinking skills for all learners and support students analyzing evidence based claims. Differentiated texts (Ain't I A woman- Truth, Steve Jobs Stanford Commencement Speech, Wimbledon Has Sent Me a Message) are utilized to promote close reading, annotation of texts, and discussion in literacy through the Light Sail program.
- Critical thinking skills are taught directly to students through the industry focus on design thinking. Design thinking allows people to use the elements of design, which are called the 5ds: Discover, Define, Design, Develop and Deliver. Through these steps students learn to create a solution or prototype to a design challenge. Teachers embed elements of this process into their units and provide students the opportunity to reflect on their process throughout units. For example, through the egg cart project, students create a prototype, evaluate and refine the model, and then revise the solution using the design thinking model. Students integrate skills obtained across content areas (Ela, math), and use what they have learned to solve real world problems through questioning, problem posing, creating and innovating, and thinking interpedently.

Area of Focus

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| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development | Rating: | Developing |
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Findings

The staff is loosely utilizing an inquiry approach to analyze student assessment data and student work. Distributive leadership structures are developing to provide teachers with voice in key decision-making.

Impact

Teacher teams are beginning to analyze assessment data and student work to improve teacher practice. Teacher leadership capacity is being developed through distributive leadership opportunities.

Supporting Evidence

- During the teacher team meeting, teachers were engaged in discussing logistics in preparation for an open house and not engaged in the inquiry process of student work or assessment data. When asked how they engage in the inquiry process and how has the worked increased student outcomes, teachers were unable to articulate how they analyze student work or data as a teacher team to impact and improve student outcomes or improve teacher practice. It was stated by the special education teacher that this will be the focus starting next year.
- Teacher teams are beginning to analyze assessment data to make informed decisions about curriculum and instruction. In mathematics, the math and physics teacher used data from the North West Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress assessment to determine the key skills students were struggling to develop. As a result, the “Physics First” curriculum was created and focused on Newtonian Physics and provided opportunities for students to practice skills like graphing linear equations and inequalities, both key algebraic skills that students struggle with as identified by the teachers. Both of these teachers completed peer observations of each other and gave feedback and aligned on how they were teaching common skills.
- Distributive leadership structures are developing to support and build leadership capacity as communicated by the principal. Teachers are beginning to lead professional development meetings around assessment and checking for understanding. All teachers are involved in and supervise extracurricular activities and coaching. Various committees help support key decision-making such as the hiring and the advisory committee, which allows teachers to have a voice.

Additional Findings

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| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Developing |
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Findings

Instructional practices across classrooms did not consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula with challenging tasks to engage all learners. Furthermore, high level student work products and discussions were not evident across some classrooms.

Impact

Although classes consist of a diverse student body across classrooms, academic tasks were not scaffolded to engage all learners and, therefore, not all students' work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- In an 9th grade Ela classroom, all students were provided the same task that did not support or possess a level of complexity to demonstrate higher order thinking or effective scaffolding for the middle and upper-tiered students. Students were paired together to support each other in researching individual topics of interest and evaluate the sources credibility, accessibility and relevance using a chart provided. A student communicated her topic of "Why is social media so addictive?" but could not articulate the purpose of the activity she was engaged in. Not all students were actively engaged in the task and could not communicate what they were expected to do and why.
- In a 9th grade Career Technical Education class, students were purposely grouped together to explain how sentence starters can improve their writing for the blogs about the egg carts they were building, however, all students were expected to complete the same task of crafting sentence starters to ensure they receive a level 4 on the rubric provided. Not all students require the level of scaffolding provided, and the middle and upper-tiered students did not have their learning needs met through this activity, which lacked rigor. There were opportunities for student differentiated writing yet those opportunities were not taken.
- During various classroom visits, there was minimal higher order questions asked that could initiate discussion and push student thinking. The questions that were asked were at Level 1 or Level 2 on the Depth of Knowledge, such as: "What did you find? What are your next steps? What was going on in America in 1945?" Students were engaged in discussion in the Physics class around how to improve their prototype cars for their egg cart project but not in a structured way where they could learn from or challenge each other's thinking or thought process.
- In the 9th grade math class, the teacher utilizes various strategies to support student individual learning needs. Each student has a personalized plan that they can track progress upon completion and mastery of specific standards. Some students work in groups, independently on Khan online learning academy, and some students receive direct support from the teacher based on their self-assessed need.

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| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

The school's faculty uses common assessments across subject areas to determine student progress toward goals. Across classrooms, teachers use assessments and rubrics aligned with the school's curricula that provide actionable feedback to students and teachers that impacts student achievement.

Impact

Data analysis is used to inform guided adjustments to units and lessons in order to meet students' learning needs. Some teachers are providing students with actionable feedback from their assessments, which allows for student achievement to improve across content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes both the Degrees of Reading Progress and North West Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress assessments in reading and math to get baseline data to determine student progress towards goals. The DRP is administered in September, December, and in the spring. The MAP is administered in September and again in May. The DRP provided a score, which was converted to a Lexile and grade level. Based on this data, the school implemented two initiatives that increased the school's DRP scores by 3% from September and December as a result of adjusting curriculum and instruction.
- Independent reading using Lightsail and a school-wide focus on reading closely, citing textual evidence, and argument writing has contributed to student growth in reading. LightSail is an online library of independent reading books that that measures student progress in reading. It uses student Lexile scores to customize a library of fiction and non-fiction books, which students check out and read on iPad minis. While reading a student's reading level is constantly being assessed through use of close assessment items that students answer while reading and by making annotations in the text.
- The school utilizes a mastery-based grading system. This system requires students to demonstrate mastery of course specific standards at least three times. These three "at bats" are different assessments ranging from presentations, written essays, projects, to demonstrations, all of which measure the same skill or content standard. Utilizing experts from Competency Works, SpringPoint Partners in School Design, The Urban Assembly Network, and redesign, the school has created a series of performance assessments that allow students opportunities to demonstrate mastery of a skill or of content knowledge.
- Some teachers utilize rubrics, checklists, post-its with feedback or next steps, individual conferences with notes, and exit tickets to monitor student progress and check for understanding during lessons. A review of teachers' conference notes and student work indicated that in some cases, formative assessment sometimes leads to instructional adjustments. Although teachers have various assessments strategies, it is unclear how they make adjustments consistently across classrooms in instruction when a majority of students are not "mastering" the standards.

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| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Developing |
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Findings

School leaders and staff are developing structures to communicate high expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness and are beginning to offer feedback to both families and students.

Impact

The school's leadership and staff are starting to establish a culture of high expectations that has resulted in parents consistently being aware of their child's progress towards meeting grade level standards and students' understanding of what is needed to reach the next grade level. The school leader is beginning to communicate high expectations through whole staff professional development.

Supporting Evidence

- The Advisory program, Parent Association and School Leadership Team, and CTE Work-Based Learning Program are the primary structures used to build the school culture. Students meet for Advisory every morning for forty minutes. Advisors completed home visits in the summer before the school year began and led parents to understand the community's expectations for students. Advisors are the main point of contact for families and they facilitate parent-teacher conferences in November.
- The school provides ongoing lines of verbal and written communication (e.g. Canvas, parent teacher conferences, parent workshops, emails, and notes backpacked home) to keep parents informed about their children's progress. Parents expressed that teachers are accessible and communicate with them continuously during the designated Tuesday parent contact time.
- Parents and students communicated they did not feel they had a voice in the decision-making process at the school, specifically around the new grading policy enlisted in January. Parents and students are unclear about the new policy and the impact it will have on student's progress and academic transcript long term. Students stated, "We talk and get ignored. They teach us we have a voice, but in reality nothing changes. They advertise that you have power and voice, but nothing ever happens. They try to validate your suggestions, just to hush you up"
- Parents and students have concerns about lack of direct instruction provided and not having all students' learning needs met. Although the school employs Khan Academy as supplemental educational resources, parents communicated, "More teachers need to be available to push and challenge students and not just rely on the laptop or Khan Academy. The teachers should be doing the teaching." Parents also stated, "Some students have taken the Regents previously and passed and are still required to take Global History again because there are no other courses being offered at the student's level".
- The Principal meets with each teacher to discuss their self-evaluation and set goals in the areas of: Domain 2 Classroom Environment and Domain 3 Instruction, specifically 3d Using Assessment in Instruction. The Principal has conducted 54 observations of the school's eight teachers. During each face-to-face debrief and Teachboost written feedback, the Principal aligned the feedback to the Danielson framework. The principal communicates expectations during 3 weeks of professional development in the summer, staff handbook, weekly PDs, 03 sessions, memos, and the professional development plan.