



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Urban Assembly Institute for New Technologies

Middle School M410

**509 West 129 Street
New York
NY 10027**

Principal: Jeffrey Chetirko

**Date of review: January 22, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Gale Reeves**

The School Context

The Urban Assembly Institute for New Technologies is a middle school with 97 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 68% Black, 31% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 44% special education students. Boys account for 61% of the students enrolled and girls account for 39%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 86.0%.

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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	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:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Administrators consistently convey their expectations to staff during trainings and other modes of communication. Workshops and performance updates keep families informed of student progress towards a path for college and career readiness.

Impact

Training structures aligned to school leaders' verbal and written feedback offer support leading to shared accountability. Additionally, families have high praise for the support their children receive, resulting in consistent and ongoing feedback that families use to support student success.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal shared that the faculty handbook serves as a central hub for all resources including daily expectations. He also shares his verbal expectations during snapshot classroom visits as well as provides written feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching after formal and informal observations. The school's professional learning plan is well aligned to the identified needs of staff. Staff and administrators engage in instructional round visits to classrooms. At the conclusion of each visit, colleagues share feedback based on the created Problem of Practice and focus questions. After each meeting, school leaders expect that teachers apply their new learning when developing their lesson plans.
- The principal's daily emails to staff continually keep them informed of expectations and anticipated changes to the schedule. The principal's weekly newsletter, the *New Tech News*, highlights teacher and student accomplishments, as well as previews the upcoming week's work, shares professional development agendas and communicates all news about the school.
- Parents and families are invited to curriculum nights where they meet with staff to learn more about the school's expectations across curricula. Students and families are kept abreast of student progress via the school's online tool Jupiter Grades. Teachers regularly update the data so that students and families are readily aware of missing assignments, student grades and inform them whether individual students are meeting or failing to meet established expectations in readiness for high school and beyond. During meetings with parents and students, both groups stated that teachers keep them well informed and share suggested ways that students can improve.
- Parents shared that monthly breakfast meetings with the principal enable them to ask questions but more importantly, celebrate student success. They like that they receive "good" phone calls and letters. Several parents shared that these calls help to "make their day." They noted that school leaders and staff are readily available to address their concerns and refer them to services as needed. Parents also participate in celebratory events such as the holiday dinner and award assemblies that acknowledge those students on the Principal's List, the school's honor roll as well as those with perfect and improved attendance.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Instructional practices do not consistently incorporate questioning and discussion strategies. Although student work products at times reflect rigorous tasks, the use of multiple entry points to support learning is uneven across classrooms.

Impact

Teachers ask thought provoking questions but, across grades, teaching practices do not consistently require all students to productively struggle with tasks that maximize their opportunities to demonstrate higher order thinking skills. This limits the level of student engagement resulting in uneven levels of participation across classrooms and lost opportunities for students to demonstrate high order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- In a math integrated class, the teachers continuously posed open-ended questions that required students to challenge each other's assumptions and allowed students to productively struggle with the assigned tasks. This was not consistent across classrooms. In others, questions and discussions remained primarily between the teacher and individual students and all teachers did not require students to struggle with complex tasks to meet their individual needs.
- Some teachers provided tools such as graphic organizers and calculators and all used smart boards throughout the day. In one social studies class, the teachers used the smart board to display historical documents and pictures in order to deepen students' understanding of the American Revolution. However, in other classrooms, teachers did not display strategy charts and smart boards were not always strategically and purposefully used to demonstrate and model concepts in order to deepen students' thinking and support their understanding.
- In one class, the teachers required students to create power point presentations comparing and contrasting characters being studied across ancient civilizations. However, this level of student engagement is not consistent across grades and departments. In a math class the teacher informed students of the operation needed to solve the word problems rather than allowing them the opportunity to figure it out. Additionally, most problems required one-step to solve. As such, all classes are not equally rigorous and did not require students to think deeply, research and extend their thinking in order to apply their learning to new concepts in multiple ways.
- Although teachers plan tasks to appropriately challenge English language learners and most students with individual learning plans, student work products displayed on hallway and classroom bulletin boards do not consistently provide evidence that tasks and discussions challenge all students, especially those performing at high academic levels.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Using student work and data, the school has developed, implemented, and refined curricula aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the instructional shifts.

Impact

Teachers plan, review and modify curricula so that a diversity of learners have access to coherently sequenced units of study in order to promote the skills necessary for college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of meeting minutes reveal that teachers use Common Core gap analysis protocols to ensure that the standards are integrated into their lesson plans. For example, teachers reviewed work products and noted that students had difficulty synthesizing primary and secondary documents noting authors' purpose. The social studies teachers now explicitly teach these skills and strategies to ensure that students meet with success on benchmark and State assessments.
- Math teachers reviewed academic tasks and performance data. They noted that the State assessments required students to spend a longer period of time immersed in the unit on scientific notation than was indicated in the school curriculum sequence. As a result, teachers made adaptations to the pacing calendar to ensure that students, especially English language learners and students with individual education plans have in-depth access to the unit to ensure mastery.
- Social studies and science tasks are aligned to the NYC Scope and Sequence and content standards. Additionally, the social studies and art departments develop interdisciplinary units of study. For example during the grade 6 unit on ancient river civilizations, the Lincoln Center teaching artist aligned the arts curriculum to help students better understand the topics being studied.
- The instructional shifts are noted in unit plans which require students to use close reading strategies to analyze, annotate and cite text across grades and curricula. For example, across math units students are asked to show their work and explain their reasoning. Teachers make real world connections such as designing problems on scale rates using tables referencing the Super Bowl to capture students' interests. Additionally, in science units, students follow multi- step procedures to hypothesize, investigate and use evidence to support and explain their claims.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers align assessments to the curricula and use the data to determine student progress towards established goals.

Impact

Data results help provide an accurate snapshot of students' progress enabling staff to adjust curricula and instruction in order to support student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers review data and use end of unit common assessments to note students' strengths and next steps. For example, after reviewing summative assessment data, one teacher stated, "we're going to need to pose more rigorous questions." As such, the teachers revised previously developed questions to strengthen student learning.
- Teachers administered baseline assessments in September and December, as well as pre and post unit assessments in all disciplines. Staff members collect these results on data trackers and use the information to inform daily planning. For example, teachers note which level students perform on, at, below or above grade level. Based on the results, teachers determine which skills must be taught, re-taught or if results show that students need to further apply or practice them.
- Students stated that teachers provide verbal and written feedback so that they know how well they are performing. Additionally, during their advisory periods, students review the online system (Jupiter Grades) to check for missing assignments and review feedback about their progress across all classes.
- The principal shared that, for the past three years, staff members have administered the Degree of Reading Power (DRP) assessment in September, December and May to determine student' independent and instructional reading levels. Teachers use this data to support student groupings and determine student growth over time.

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

Teachers participate in weekly professional collaborations across grades and departments. Leadership structures enable teachers to have input on key decisions about curricula and teaching practices.

Impact

Team meetings strengthen teachers' instructional capacity and enable them to assume collective responsibility for improving student outcomes. Distributed leadership structures enable teachers to build their pedagogic practices resulting in improved academic gains.

Supporting Evidence

- Instructional leadership team members made up of Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) coaches, the LEAP teacher and the special education coordinator, meet weekly with the principal and network coach. Team members develop the professional development calendar and uses student and teacher support data to revise the calendar to meet teachers' individual, small group and whole school needs.
- Teacher teams review formative and summative results, share strategies and make instructional decisions. For example, during the English department team meeting, teachers used a protocol for test question analysis in order to code questions by strand and identify the required skills needed to achieve proficiency. Teachers discussed the frequency that students have to practice specific skills and reviewed adaptations needed to their lessons such as the integration of specific vocabulary and content language across grades.
- Teachers demonstrate their leadership skills when they facilitate weekly grade/department meetings as well as chair partner meetings with community based organizations. Additionally, teachers write grants and other proposals. For example, teachers wrote a proposal, which enabled twenty students to participate on a weekly basis in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) initiative with the Intrepid space program.