



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Urban Assembly New York Harbor School

High School M551

**10 South Street, Slip 7
Manhattan
NY 10004**

Principal: Kimberly Swanson

**Date of review: April 22, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Vivian Orlen**

The School Context

The Urban Assembly New York Harbor School is a high school with 431 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 24% Black, 51% Hispanic, 19% White, 3% Asian, and 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 62% of the students enrolled and girls account for 38%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 89.0%.

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	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	Developing
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	Developing

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 are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Purposeful curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. All learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal and assistant principal provide ongoing feedback to teachers regarding unit and lesson plan development, emphasizing the alignment to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the instructional shifts. An agenda of a recent professional development session allotted time for teachers to work to identify standards, skills, and habits of mind that students across all content areas need to develop in order to successfully engage in rigorous tasks.
- Most unit plans demonstrate coherence in the incorporation of essential questions in all subjects and grades. There is a strong alignment to the CCLS and there are rigorous performance tasks that engage students in solving complex problems.
- All students are engaged in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, such as Marine Biology, Vessel Operations and Scuba Diving, where curricula and academic tasks promote college and career readiness for all students.

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 that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Teachers inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

A lack of coherence in teacher practices and inconsistent implementation of effective scaffolds and supports leads to uneven demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in student work, including the work of English language learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Although the principal, teachers, and students described a school-wide focus on annotation and students citing evidence in their writing and speaking, this practice was not consistently observed across the majority of classrooms visited. In one history class, while there was evidence of students annotating the text they had just read, some students could not explain how this practice was helping them understand the text.
- Although the principal indicated that teachers were in the process of encouraging student to student discussion and allowing more wait time to better support students as they reflected on questions asked by the teacher and their classmates, these practices were not consistently seen across all classrooms. For example, in a U.S. History class students were asked to analyze political cartoons independently. The discussion that followed was characterized by the teacher asking individual students' questions. There was no student to student interaction.
- When asked, several students across classrooms could not articulate what they were learning and why it was important. In a geometry class observed students flipping coins in an attempt to determine the probability of getting one tail. Students could not articulate an application of probability when asked how they could apply what they were learning.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

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

Impact

The school's assessment practices provide limited feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Inconsistent use of ongoing checks for understanding limits effective adjustments to meet all learners' needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers' use peer and self-assessment practices varied. In the Marine Biology class, students worked in groups and then graded each other's work before sharing it with the entire class. In other classrooms visited, although students worked together, they did not peer or self-assess their work. This resulted in some students not being able to articulate what they were working on and why it was important. It also resulted in others, once they were stuck, not being able to complete the task.
- Across classrooms, teachers' use of checks for understanding varied. In a chemistry class, students were placed in groups to conduct experiments. However the teacher was unaware that their lack of understanding of the chemical principles made it impossible for them to independently work on the task. The majority of students in this class were unable to work on the task unless the teacher was present at their table.
- Rubrics are not used consistently across classrooms. For example, while the grade 10 team uses common writing rubrics, this practice is not currently shared school wide.

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

- Parents stated that the school offers extensive information and resources about college and career readiness. The school provides students with an array of internships that further support the College and Technical Education (CTE) focus of Harbor School. All CTE programs organize industry visits and internships to expose students to careers in the fields of marine science and technology.
- Incoming ninth grade students new to the school participate in a maritime-based orientation that teaches leadership, communication, problem-solving, and an ability to work with different people in different situations.
- Professional development is aligned to 3b and 3c of the Danielson Framework for Teaching identified by the administration. Several teachers explained how they regularly reflect on their practice based on professional development and strategize specific ways they plan to implement new learning into the classroom. For example, teachers are receiving actionable, face to face feedback more this year than in past years.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations that are beginning to promote the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts, and align practice to the school’s instructional goals. A distributed leadership structure is emerging.

Impact

As teacher collaborations are just beginning to utilize a structured inquiry approach, teachers’ instructional practice does not yet demonstrate consistent growth. Leadership opportunities to engage teachers in key decisions that affect student learning across the school are in the emergent stages.

Supporting Evidence

- Although teachers meet in teams to develop instructional strategies to support groups of students that they work with, there's no structure in place for how improvements to teacher practice connected to the strategies is tracked.
- Teacher teamwork is at various degrees of implementation across the school. Only some teachers on teams use clearly articulated specific instructional strategies connected to targeted groups of students and could describe the process they use to track student progress and how this informs changes in curriculum and instruction.
- Grade team leaders meet weekly with the principal to discuss and determine instructional priorities, engaging in inquiry, and receive coaching and feedback on rolling out inquiry work on their teams. As a result of this targeted work to build teacher team leader capacity, all grade teams are beginning to incorporate inquiry cycles into their meeting time.