



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2015-2016

**Academy of Urban Planning**

**High School K552**

**400 Irving Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11237**

**Principal: Kyleema Norman**

**Date of review: March 30, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Gary Knight**

## The School Context

Academy of Urban Planning is a high school with 227 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 0% Asian, 22% Black, 75% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 26% English Language Learners and 26% students with disabilities. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 82.1%.

## School Quality Criteria

| <b>Instructional Core</b>  |                            |                       |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>To what extent does the school...</i>   | <b>Area of:</b>            | <b>Rating:</b>        |
| 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   | <b>Additional Findings</b> | <b>Proficient</b>     |
| 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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products | <b>Focus</b>               | <b>Proficient</b>     |
| 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   | <b>Additional Findings</b> | <b>Proficient</b>     |
| <b>School Culture</b>  |                            |                       |
| <i>To what extent does the school...</i>   | <b>Area of:</b>            | <b>Rating:</b>        |
| 3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations  | <b>Celebration</b>         | <b>Well Developed</b> |
| <b>Systems for Improvement</b>   |                            |                       |
| <i>To what extent does the school...</i>   | <b>Area of:</b>            | <b>Rating:</b>        |
| 4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning   | <b>Additional Findings</b> | <b>Proficient</b>     |

## Area of Celebration

|                           |                              |                |                       |
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| <b>Quality Indicator:</b> | <b>3.4 High Expectations</b> | <b>Rating:</b> | <b>Well Developed</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|

### Findings

The school leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training for these expectations. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

### Impact

The school leader's consistent communication of high expectations has resulted in a culture of mutual accountability for those expectations. The school leader and staff successfully partner with families to support progress toward those expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal communicates high expectations through the school's instructional focus to prepare students for college and careers by actively engaging them in learning and providing opportunities for reading, writing, speaking and listening throughout all classes. Expectations are also communicated via town hall meetings, email, memos, one-on-one conferencing, a staff handbook and professional development workshops. For example, embedded throughout the professional development calendar are sessions specifically focused on a uniformed lesson plan that emphasizes the school's five elements of teaching: reading, writing, varied teaching resources, assessment and discussion. Based on the workshop topics, teachers are expected to implement featured instructional practices with their students. As a follow up, school leaders conduct both formal and informal classroom observations with immediate feedback provided to teachers.
- To further reinforce said expectations, the school's administration team meets with teacher leaders who in turn relay information discussed, to their peers. The teachers regularly meet and have conversations related to expectations as a means of holding each other accountable. In addition, they plan intervisitations and give each other feedback on the implementation of the five elements of teaching.
- The school leader and staff communicate and partner with families in a myriad of ways including but not limited to Skedula's online grading system, parent surveys, school leadership and parent-teacher meetings. In addition to the school's direct efforts to provide family engagement workshops and exposure to the academic expectations and curricula, with take-home assignments, they have developed various partnerships that help to inform families about their child's progress toward college and career readiness. These partner organizations provide structured workshops that guide parents with skills necessary to navigate the college preparation and application process. For example, due to the large Hispanic population of families served, the Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow-Anchor UP Project provides college and career readiness workshops for Spanish-speaking immigrant students and families.
- Parents volunteer within the school, assisting with clerical duties, and as classroom parents. Parents also co-plan school-sponsored events, such as take your child to school day, with the parent coordinator. These efforts have helped the school's graduation rate to increase by approximately 7 points.

## Area of Focus

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| <b>Quality Indicator:</b> | <b>1.2 Pedagogy</b> | <b>Rating:</b> | <b>Proficient</b> |
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points in the curricula for all learners.

### Impact

Teaching practices are informed by *the Danielson Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts, and students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher order thinking skills. However, higher-order thinking questions were not observed.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers' lessons reflect alignment to curricula through the inclusion of Common Core Learning Standards and the variation in delivery of lesson to address how students learn best. For example, a grade 10 English lesson expected students to determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text. The lesson also included multiple opportunities for students to grasp concepts taught through writing and reflecting and experiencing the "world café" strategy, which allows students to rotate to different learning stations with one student as the leader at each station mixing with different groups of students as they rotate. Similarly, in a grade 9 class visited, students were expected to explain and describe how DNA technology has given scientists the tools with which to examine how certain species are related. Students were to determine the meaning of key terms and other domain specific words used in a scientific context. Students were provided scaffolds, such as images, as part of the performance task and graphic organizers to record their findings.
- During a visit to a U.S. History and Government class, students were analyzing the American fear of communism spreading within the U.S. during the Cold War, culminating in students writing an informative/explanatory piece. Students worked in groups to analyze political cartoons and explain their message in the graphic organizer provided. Intentional use of academic vocabulary was infused throughout the lesson. In a grade 11 English class students were grouped heterogeneously to support varied reading levels, learning styles and English fluency.
- Lessons observed presented opportunities for appropriately challenging tasks as evidenced in the English, science, and history classes, as well as others visited. Essential questioning was also planned for in lessons and observed in some classes. For example, in an ecology class during a four-corner activity, students had to respond to questions such as, "Does everyone in the world deserve access to clean, safe drinking water because it is a human right?" They also had to explain their reasoning and attempt to answer the overarching question, "How can we propose that action be taken to prevent illness from water contamination at Bushwick Campus?" However, there were missed opportunities in classes visited to ask higher order thinking questions to further push critical thinking. In a social studies class, students were developing their own questions based on a reading passage. However, during groups sharing out, low-level student-developed questions were not addressed by the teacher. Some examples of questions developed by students were, "Did Lady Macbeth go insane?" and "Were the characters' eyes open or closed?" No questions were observed being asked in a science and a math class.

## Additional Findings

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| <b>Quality Indicator:</b> | <b>1.1 Curriculum</b> | <b>Rating:</b> | <b>Proficient</b> |
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, integrate the instructional shifts, and school leaders and staff make purposeful decisions to build coherence. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills.

### Impact

The school's curricula promote college and career readiness for all students. Rigorous habits and higher order skills are present across grades and subjects for all students, including English Language Learners (ELL), and students with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school's math and English unit maps are developed from *EngageNY*. The science and social studies unit maps follow the New York City Scope and Sequence. A review of curricular documents provides evidence that instructional shifts are integrated. For example, an Advanced Placement language and composition curriculum unit expects students to cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as what can be inferred from the text. In addition, the school partners with the National Training Network who provides a coach twice a month to work with the staff to address coherence and assist with curriculum planning.
- The teachers use a common lesson plan template that further builds coherence while also providing rigor. For example, the template requires lessons to articulate how teachers will use five key elements including reading, writing, varied teaching resources, assessment and high level questioning and discussion. A review of curricular documents, such as an urban Ecology unit, plans for scaffolds to address diverse learner needs. For example, ELLs will be provided translations and simplified text alongside the English version of text.
- The school has incorporated Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) strategies into the school-wide curriculum, which provides teachers with methodologies to develop students' critical thinking skills and encourage high-level student engagement. Teachers also plan with the use of levels 3 and 4 questioning which address strategic thinking and extended thinking respectively, as a part of their Aim for students. In addition, the Writing is Thinking Strategic Inquiry (WITsi) curriculum is used to address and improve critical thinking through writing across the grades.
- In addition to seven advanced placement courses with curricula such as a "Language and Composition" unit on assessing fluency in key aspects of rhetoric, the school also partners with Y-PLAN Center for Cities and School to offer learning through work-career preparation curricula. The career preparation curricula provide practical experience with various organizations and civic leaders that helps students to develop problem solving, critical inquiry skills necessary to be successful postsecondary education.

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| <b>Quality Indicator:</b> | <b>2.2 Assessment</b> | <b>Rating:</b> | <b>Proficient</b> |
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### **Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subjects.

### **Impact**

The use of assessments and rubrics provides actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. The results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- English teachers plan together to create formative and summative assessments by grade. Similarly, in math, algebra and geometry tests are developed by teachers of that subject. Mock Regents and mock Advanced Placement tests are also teacher-developed and administered to students twice a year. The school also has a standard grading policy that allocates 30% to skill (classwork), 50% for content (tests, quizzes, projects) and 20% for effort (participation, homework and attendance).
- Some of the rubrics used by teachers to provide feedback to students include New York State Common Core English Language Arts and Literacy, presentation, thematic essay writing and Living Environment. For example, on a Living Environment task, a student received the following feedback regarding next steps, "I'd like to see you rewrite your topic sentence and support your arguments in a logical order that makes it easy and interesting to follow." During the student meeting all students expressed familiarity with the use of rubrics, explaining that teachers provide them feedback in the form of glows and grows. One student articulated that her glow was in the area of expanding her ideas and her grow is to work on identifying key details.
- Data revealed that students experienced skill deficits in writing, and specifically were challenged by expanding ideas and using details. The use of content vocabulary was also lacking. As a result, teachers incorporated very specific language interventions and applied Hochman writing strategies to help students develop more complex and well-structured writing pieces. Samples of student work provided for review indicate students are becoming more confident in their writing as evidenced in more structured and developed paragraphs and work products.

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| <b>Quality Indicator:</b> | <b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b> | <b>Rating:</b> | <b>Proficient</b> |
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of the school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

**Impact**

The school’s inquiry based professional collaborations have strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers, typically resulting in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school has various teacher team structures in place that include peer learning community, attendance, department and grade. The grade teams’ focus is on WITSI through looking at students’ writing data. The department teams’ primary function is to review and revise curricula based on alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and student data.
- The grade 12 teacher team was observed reviewing student data based on the teachers’ implementation of the appositive strategy with students. The select group of student work reviewed came from a subgroup identified as emergent writers. The teachers conducted an analysis, discussed findings, and provided feedback and next steps for teachers to inform future instruction. Teachers clearly identified which students acquired the skill and which did not. It was determined that teachers would model the use of appositives, have students read aloud to a partner to capture grammatical errors, and teachers would review adjectives, nouns, and hanging appositives with students.
- Based on teacher teams’ documents reviewed, grade 11 teachers conducted a similar inquiry meeting with student data for the lower performers. The two areas they focused on are use of appositives and sentence expansion. Teachers identified next instructional steps were to incorporate appositives into lessons through matching and fill in the blanks. To address next instructional steps for sentence expansion, the teacher will use students’ writing as and ask students to expand on it by asking, “What is in the question?” and “To whom are they addressing and/or why?”
- Teachers articulated that the team structures helps to inform their lesson planning and differentiation based on shared practices discussed during meetings and intervisitations. Teachers noted that they are able not only to brainstorm ideas but to receive ongoing collegial feedback as well. Teachers also stated that students have become more engaged in the reading and writing process. For example, there were students who were writing very little and are now producing structured writing pieces. As evidenced in one artifact entitled, “Instructional Strategy/Student Outcomes Debrief Protocol”, more students are on task with expressing clarity in writing and identifying literary elements.