Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Urban Assembly School for Careers in Sports

High School X548

730 Concourse Village West
Bronx
NY 10451

Principal: Johanny Garcia

Dates of review: February 3, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline Gonzalez
The School Context

Urban Assembly School for Careers in Sports is a high school with 587 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 28% Black, 70% Hispanic, 1% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 83% of the students enrolled and girls account for 17%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-15 was 82.6%.

School Quality Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Culture</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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### Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

#### Findings
Across grades and departments all teachers meet weekly in structured collaborative planning and inquiry teams. Teams of teachers assess student work and instructional planning documents to assess student learning for groups of students they share.

#### Impact
Teacher team work promotes the achievement of school-wide goals related to the expectations of Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. The analysis of student work and subsequent discussions about teaching strategies improve student work and strengthen teacher capacity across the school.

#### Supporting Evidence

- The school has several structures for teacher collaboration that are described by staff as being one of the most supportive mechanisms for strengthening their pedagogical practices and cohesiveness as a staff. Teachers meet weekly by departments, grade level and in leadership collaborations. Teachers also meet frequently in informal structures via email, online conversations and after school to discuss student progress and instructional planning. The focus of these teams is to increase collaboration and support the attainment of school-wide goals for supporting student learning and achievement. Teachers also share best practices and make decisions about coherent expectations school wide.

- Teachers state that weekly collaboration with colleagues, by grade and department, has enabled them to share best practices, as well as solve for identified areas for improvement in their pedagogy. For example, by developing common expectations for student learning, lesson structures and rubric-based assessments, students are clear on expectations for learning and for producing work. These common expectations are reflected in course outlines, feedback to students and posted reminders of reading and writing strategies.

- Teachers indicate that the opportunity to provide one another feedback on lessons and strategies especially in support of students with disabilities and English language learners has increased their individual repertoire of strategies to include in their plans as they strive to support all of their students. Teacher teams use protocols for looking at student work to identify necessary adjustments to instruction such as modeling strategies for problem solving and using acronyms to help student organize their writing. During the teacher team observation, teachers stated that the use of common acronyms such as MEAL, which helps students remember elements of Main Idea, Evidence, Analysis and Linking ideas to their written work has strengthened how teachers assess writing across contents and is supporting all learners by providing them reliable structures that reinforce expectations for their work.
Area of Focus

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

Findings
Across classrooms, some lessons provide scaffolds and entry points into the curriculum and engage students in appropriately challenging tasks. There are emerging practices across classrooms that reflect the facilitation of student discussion and higher-order thinking.

Impact
While some teachers use instructional strategies to support students’ academic language development and provide scaffolds that enable all learners to complete rigorous tasks, across classrooms these practices are inconsistent and do not always yield higher-order discussions and high levels of student participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson structures across classrooms reflect the school-wide beliefs about student learning in varying ways. Most classrooms have lesson aims and activities that prompt student discussion. For example, a math lesson aim asks, “How do we construct a mathematical model for a given situation?” and is followed by activities that engages students in the school’s expected structures for student to student discussion and collaborative problem solving. In other lessons however, most of the questions were recall and restate questions and the teacher answered some of the higher-order questions with little time for student analysis. The emerging practices for facilitation of student thinking and engagement in critical analysis, although not fully embedded in some classroom lessons, are developing.

- Questioning and facilitation techniques have been prioritized instructional strategies and the subject of professional development for teachers. Across lessons teachers use question prompts to further student thinking by asking them to provide reasons for their answers and to give evidence from text when sharing their perspectives on readings. In some classes teachers prompt the discussion and then ask students to continue the conversation with their peers. Teachers then monitor the level and focus of the student discourse as they walk around the room. However, in some lessons, the questions were in rapid sequence and did not always provide time for students to think or analyze content. Other lessons included higher-order questions but did not yield discussion as students were unclear or needed further explanation about the task. As a result, there were uneven levels of student thinking and participation across classrooms.

- Teachers use scaffolds and direct questions to support academic language development and the use of content vocabulary, especially in classrooms with English language learners, students who have demonstrated lack of proficiency on assessments, and students with disabilities. Visual representations and models provided entry points for diverse learners into the lesson and academic tasks. For example, in one lesson students looked at photographs from a particular time period and were asked how the scene was similar or different. Although the pictures prompted conversations, the focus of the lesson was not clear for many students and required redirection throughout the lesson. In another lesson, the teacher asked students to activate their prior knowledge to come up with possible answers to the lesson aim, though not all students were engaged in the task. The inconsistent use of the questioning strategies results in varying levels of student engagement in some classrooms.
Additional Findings

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
Across grades and content areas, teachers use rubrics and Common Core aligned assessments to determine student progress towards learning goals. Information from assessments and analysis of student work products provides meaningful feedback to teachers and students.

Impact
Consistent assessment practices lead to effective instructional and curricular adjustments that meet student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- In prior years the Degrees of Reading Power assessment of students’ reading levels was administered school wide. The information from this assessment was then used to design reading programs and interventions based on the data that indicated that most students were reading below grade level. As a result, teachers developed structures and strategies to increase independent reading time by using an electronic-based program called Light Sail. Teachers currently use data from this digital reading program and record keeping system that assesses student comprehension of progressively complex texts, rates of completion and performance on comprehension skills to modify lessons and provide support for students based on specific learning needs.

- Across subjects, teacher’s use of data from common assessments has increased instructional coherence school-wide. In math for example, teachers focus assessments on precision, computation and demonstrating thinking in problem solving. In English and history student work is assessed using NYS standards-based writing rubrics which focus on thesis, structure, organization, and evidence-based claims. Teachers state that the use of acronyms for organizing written ideas and common rubrics, which students can use to self-assess and make revisions to their work based on teacher verbal and written feedback, has increased students' ability to demonstrate critical thinking and analysis of text through their work. Across grades teachers adjust tasks and encourage students to use the word MEAL to remember Main Idea, Evidence, Analysis and Linking to other ideas as a way to structure their essays. This shared language has strengthened student writing across the school and is used with diverse learners as a scaffold and support.

- Teachers’ analysis of work products connected to Regents preparation tasks in global history revealed that most students were doing well in interpretation of information-paraphrasing, restating and summarizing. However, data indicated that the challenge was in the analysis of the text, content or concepts being presented in document-based questions. Therefore across grades, teachers embed multiple opportunities for students to extend their thinking by providing discussion time and planning questions that ask students to form opinions and conclusions based on their readings.
Quality Indicator: 3.4 High Expectations  Rating: Proficient

Findings
Administrators and teachers communicate high expectations through the school community and offer a variety of programs via community and college partnerships and professional development opportunities to support students and teachers as they work towards meeting those expectations.

Impact
The school's varied structures for promoting college and career readiness have increased student awareness and interest in meeting the expectations beyond graduation. Teachers, administrators and families hold themselves accountable for student learning and progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Administrators use the language of the Danielson Framework in providing teachers verbal and written feedback about pedagogical expectations school-wide. This shared language has increased a shared understanding for teacher effectiveness and professionalism. Teachers hold themselves accountable and give each other feedback about their progress through intervisitations and collaborative discussions about how they are moving towards expectations.

- Administrators, teachers and families participate in ongoing conversations about expectations for student success, achievement, graduation and post-secondary readiness. The principal states that the challenge of large numbers of students below proficiency in reading and inconsistent credit accumulation rates has not changed the fact that the staff and families have high standards for their children and together, they promote college and career readiness in multiple ways. Some of examples of programs that engage students in explicit planning for their futures are the partnership with Monroe College which enables students in 11th and 12th grades to take credit bearing college courses before graduation. A course description for senior seminar in sociology exposes students to the "college-feel" of rigorous discussion and expectation for college level work. The guidance counselor facilitates a college readiness class for 12th graders that engages students in essay writing, the college application process, and college and career exploration.

- The school's communication with parents is described by parents as "open and welcoming". The parents say that overall, teachers and administrators express genuine care and concern for students and that they appreciate the school's interest in their children's success. Parents also state that they receive frequent information about their children's progress and opportunities beyond the school day that help their children plan for successful college and career experiences.
Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum  
Rating: Proficient

Findings
The school's curricula, aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, reflect planning for school-wide instructional coherence and student attainment of grade and content area standards. The instructional shifts are embedded in academic tasks to promote higher-order thinking and discussions.

Impact
Academic tasks and instructional plans designed to promote student thinking and engagement ensure a coherent instructional program that requires college and career readiness skills of all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Each content area has a curriculum map, tasks and resources that are aligned to the expectations of the Common Core. Teachers have engaged in curriculum development over the past few years to embed questioning, collaborative work, problem solving and text analysis into lessons. This has led to a school-wide increase of lessons that require higher-order student thinking and engagement in rigorous tasks based on Webb's' Depth of Knowledge, as well as increased planning for teacher facilitation of student discussion.

- Each content area has been aligned to make rigorous tasks accessible to diverse learners. Math courses use Engage NY resources to include questions and rigorous tasks as reflected in the algebra and geometry courses. The focus on literacy and reading comprehension strategies is embedded in the history curriculum in which students are asked to interpret evidence from readings and use it to support claims in their writing. In English language arts, there is an expectation for a common writing process that includes drafting and revising after teacher and peer review and final draft. Students are taught to use close reading strategies like annotation for analyzing text. Science includes the New York State standards and incorporates Common Core aligned reading and writing standards into lab reports and projects.

- Lessons and units reflect skills and standards by grade and content area. Teachers interviewed indicate that at grade level inquiry team meetings they review student work and unit assessments and identify trends in student misconceptions or mastery of goals. These discussions lead to identifying a different strategy, change in pace for re-teaching or curricular adjustments to consider before moving to the next unit. To ensure that all learners have access to tasks and are able to engage in the learning activities teachers include scaffolds such as graphic organizers, models or exemplars of desired products or language development strategies.