Quality Review Report

2016-2017

The Urban Assembly School for Collaborative Healthcare

High school 19K764

999 Jamaica Ave
Brooklyn
NY 11208

Principal: Candace Hugee

Dates of Review:
October 24, 2016 - October 25, 2016

Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor
**The Quality Review Report**

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

**Information about the School**

The Urban Assembly School for Collaborative Healthcare serves students in grade 9 through grade 11. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

**School Quality Ratings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<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 Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<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 Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
</tr>
<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 Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate schoolwide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<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>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings
School staff collaborate effectively with each other and with students’ families to create an environment characterized by an advisory program and a range of other academic and social-emotional learning supports for all students.

Impact
High levels of support for students’ academic and social-emotional learning needs contribute to students’ personal and academic growth.

Supporting Evidence

- Staff members have implemented initiatives across the school community that provide support for students’ academic and social-emotional growth, helping them to develop the skills that they need to successfully navigate high school, college and beyond. During a College Awareness Week event staff members engaged students in college preparation and application activities, resulting in students becoming more informed about expected academic and social behaviors. At a student meeting students described having opportunities for engagement in industry based learning activities at organizations such as Jamaica Hospital. Some also spoke of participation in programs such as Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corp and College Now at Borough of Manhattan Community College, which allow them to further develop academic and social skills. Some students gain access to an advanced placement (AP) class in Microeconomics through the school’s partnership with another high school, leading to additional support for their academic growth.

- A schoolwide advisory system allows each student to be a member of a small group of peers, with adults who provide daily support for their academic and social-emotional needs. Students meet in advisory groups for fifty-five minutes twice per week, which allow for the building of supportive relationships with advisors who provide homework help and tutoring, focus attention on goal-setting and underscore connections between work habits and success in school and life. Mentors get to know students well, tracking their academic progress via binder checks and transcript reviews, and sharing concerns, especially for the most at-risk students. There is added focus on the senior students (grade eleven) in this relatively new school, with close monitoring of their progress as they move towards being the school’s first cohort of high school graduates.

- Equipped with training in advisory practices, selected staff members team up with a guidance counselor, parent coordinator, partnership coordinator, and other staff, to work with students and families in implementing attendance and behavior intervention plans. Supported by resources from a Student Success Center, these staff members meet weekly to identify students with attendance problems and conduct outreach to families. Outreach efforts result in personalized meetings with the students, phone calls and home visits by some staff members, including the principal. These coordinated services result in many students missing school less often, as evidenced by attendance data, and a reduction of reported incidents, as measured by Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) data.
Area of Focus

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy

Rating: Developing

Findings

While some teachers use teaching strategies that engage students at all levels, most lessons viewed neither incorporated rigorous tasks, nor consistently immersed students in peer-to-peer discussions.

Impact

Across classrooms, there were missed opportunities to deepen learning by consistently engaging all students in challenging tasks and discussions that foster higher order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- In some classrooms, teachers assign rigorous tasks requiring students to cite evidence to support their responses. For example, in a grade eleven class, the teacher asked students to review slides with text and follow up with reading and annotating portions of other texts to answer focus questions about historical developments in healthcare. However, in several other classrooms, tasks were of low demand, requiring students either to fill in blank spaces on handouts that provided little room for in-depth written responses to the task, or to read short excerpts of texts to answer a few low-level questions. In a grade ten class the students read a handout with one paragraph descriptions of ways to get involved in government to respond to the task of discussing a few ways for citizens to get involved in local government. Responses taken directly from the handout included, voting, attending community meetings, becoming a poll worker, and/or getting elected to an office. Additionally, most work products on some bulletin boards and in some student folders consisted of worksheets with little extended writing.

- While some lessons challenged students to respond to varied tasks with teachers providing multiple entry points to meet students’ diverse needs, other lessons did not engage all students in critical thinking tasks via similar supports. In a grade nine class, the teacher facilitated small group work that required students to view images of cells projected on a whiteboard, work with a peer to share their observations, use a Cornell Note-taking sheet to define academic vocabulary such as organelle, cell, and tissue, that directly relate to the images, and place them in order from smallest to largest. Similarly, in a literature class the teacher engaged students in viewing a video clip, listening to music, and taking notes for a discussion of how an author uses pictures and music to convey tone, mood and message in literary works. By contrast, in another classroom, grade ten students spent most of the observed time annotating words in an article about Judaism and Christianity. Many finished quickly and chatted with peers while waiting for a next step. One said, “The teacher only said to underline so we don’t have to write anything yet.”

- Discussions in a few classes engaged students in sharing ideas to complete tasks, including reading texts with their partner to create their own questions or answer questions posed by the teacher. In a class for English Language Learners (ELLs), the teacher used a whiteboard to present a passage in Spanish, which illustrated question prompts and their positioning in sentences. The follow-up activity involved students working with peers to place an appropriate question prompt such as, who, what, why, and where in blank spaces in a similar passage based on the context and content in the passage. Students cited words from the text that gave them clues that helped them to select the correct prompt, resulting in participation in the discussion by the entire class. However, several other lessons were, for the most part, teacher dominated, including one where grade eleven students silently worked on a do now addressing the life cycle and mass of a star, while the teacher kept asking and answering his own questions. This led to only a few students becoming engaged in a teacher-student-teacher question and answer dialogue.
Findings

With support from curriculum development tools such as a Curriculum Mapping and Coaching Alignment rubric, the principal and teachers are engaged in ongoing alignment of curricula to applicable standards. Using student work and data, teachers continue to develop learning tasks for cognitive engagement of all students in all lesson activities, across content areas and grades.

Impact

Across classrooms students at diverse proficiency levels do not yet consistently have access to curricula that allow them to be cognitively engaged in standards-based learning activities across all disciplines.

Supporting Evidence

- Based on a common lesson and unit template aligned to Understanding by Design principles, curriculum maps for some content areas explicitly state unit topics, targeted standards, skills, texts, essential questions, tasks, and assessments. For the most part, curricula reflect Common Core Learning Standards and with the addition of grade eleven in September 2016, teachers are currently aligning the applicable content area curricula to their respective standards for that grade. Teachers use Collections curricula for English Language Arts and Regents aligned curricula for courses such as Algebra I and II, Geometry, Earth Science, Living Environment, Global History and US History. Through the application of a Curriculum Mapping and Coaching Alignment rubric, the principal continues to support teachers in introducing curricula for new courses, including an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) course for grade nine students. Teachers are also in the process of using the Atlas Rubicon online tool for mapping curricula to align with the school’s mission of offering a range of courses that prepare students for careers in healthcare.

- Across the curricula, there are course descriptions, unit maps, and pacing guides that focus on tasks that require close reading of texts to support writing activities. However, tasks linked to complex texts are not yet consistently evident in unit and lesson plans. Most tasks are designed around excerpts of short articles and handouts seen during classroom visits. A US History task required students to read a handout with brief excerpts about constitutional amendments and then chart them in their order of occurrence. One task addressing the Powers of the Constitution involved students filling in responses in blank spaces on a handout that contained a short text. Further, although a schoolwide focus on the use of text-based evidence in arguments is beginning to deepen the integration of Common Core instructional shifts in units of instruction, student work products do not consistently demonstrate the use of multiple texts in writing across content areas.

- As part of planning based on student work, unit plans and some lesson plans offer students access to cognitively engaging tasks. For example, a literacy task required students to read about warning labels for sugary drinks and use varied graphic organizers to apply their learning and life experiences in creating an argumentative essay on that topic. Tasks in a curriculum map aligned to College Board Standards for a new AP course in English Literature and Composition, further illustrate a focus on using student work and data to address the needs of advanced learners. Teacher team meeting documents reference some additional examples of on-going modifications of curricula based on student work and data, including the introduction of the Cornell Note-taking template to strengthen literacy skills across content areas and grades. Teachers are beginning to build on this work, using data from recent assessments, including the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) and mock Regents exams administered recently.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Assessment practices across grades and content areas illustrate the use of rubrics, grading policies, student self-assessment, and formal assessments such as DRP and industry exams in healthcare, to generate data on student performance.

Impact

Assessment practices consistently communicate actionable feedback on student progress, to staff and students, leading to adjustments to curriculum and instruction that reflect student needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use a schoolwide grading policy, aligned to curricula, to provide feedback to students and other staff regarding student performance on assessments across disciplines. Student portfolios and binders contain copies of formal assessments, including mock Regents. During the meeting with students they reported that they login to the PupilPath online portal to see grades and other feedback on their performance in all classes. Some added that most teachers provide verbal feedback in one to one or small group conferences during instruction. Work samples in student folders also indicate that teachers use rubrics aligned to selected State standards and past Regents exams to help students develop proficiency in meeting requirements for the applicable Regents assessments.

- Actionable feedback that serves as an indicator of student mastery of the targeted skills is consistently evident across classrooms. A review of most student work samples illustrated rubric-based feedback via performance level scores and teacher comments on post-its. Comments made on a literary essay comparing two poems included commendations to the student for supporting his work with well-chosen quotes, having a concise introduction and following all prompts well. A next step for the student was to fully decipher the quotes to clarify the author’s point of view. Similarly, teacher feedback on a report about a career in healthcare commended the student for excellent work in using multiple sources of information and advised the student to add more details to the job description segment of the report.

- Interviews of students indicated that the practice of having students use rubrics to self-assess and monitor their own work is consistent across classrooms. Students reported that teachers guide them in using rubrics to engage in peer and self-assessment. One student described her use of a rubric to rate a research project about a career as an anesthesiologist. For teachers, practices during instruction consistently showed ongoing assessment of individual student learning. In a class with both native English speakers and ELLs, the teacher worked with small groups of students and circulated to assess student understanding of how to read and decode text in Spanish and how to use Spanish words in answering questions about a narrative selection written in Spanish. Based on a quick review of responses from students around the room, the teacher encouraged some students to connect pictures and words and sat with others to address misunderstandings by modeling and re-visiting sentences from the mini-lesson presented earlier in the period.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Using multi-media tools and technology based systems, including Google Drive applications, the principal effectively communicates high expectations to staff and provides multiple supports for them to collaborate in fostering progress towards the expectations. All staff members share with families, the high expectations they have for students and support them in helping their children make progress in meeting these expectations.

Impact

A culture of high expectations promotes staff accountability for ongoing teaching and learning and supports families' understanding of their children’s progress towards achieving all expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Interviews of selected teachers indicate that through team discussions at faculty conferences, emails, one-to-one meetings, bulletins, memos, and dissemination of information via Google Docs, the principal ensures that all staff members are fully informed about expectations related to instruction, professional development, and many other areas of school operations. This includes emphasis on effective questioning, differentiation of instruction, use of strategies that promote high levels of student engagement and varied ways of assessing learning each day. The principal reviews conference notes, curriculum units and lesson plans, and analyzes student work, to hold all staff accountable for all expectations. One teacher cited specific feedback about her lesson plan, which included support for improving her questioning techniques.

- The principal uses the Danielson Framework for Teaching to reinforce specific instructional expectations. All teachers receive on-site professional development support to improve their pedagogy. Additionally, some teachers receive professional development at sites that feature training in instructional strategies, such as the use of annotation practices and AP for All, a program of instructional practices across classrooms that promotes college-level thinking for all students. The principal also meets regularly with teachers to provide feedback on lessons and engage them in reviews of student portfolios, class data, and their own self-assessment. This fosters the sharing of strategies for success in meeting expectations. Participants at teacher team meetings noted that peers sometimes model teaching strategies for other teachers, based on needs expressed by the teacher or discerned via classroom observations.

- Parents reported that staff members invite them to participate in sharing learning goals for their children and meet with them to review topics such as graduation requirements, career options, college admissions, as well as college level courses available to their children. Communication tools such as School CNXT, a new text messaging App, letters, flyers, School Messenger phone calls, emails, a newsletter, and monthly calendars keep families up-to-date on school events. Parents are informed of college tours, internships, service learning projects and extracurricular activities through this multi-faceted system. In addition, during the parent meeting, parents praised the school for high expectations and added that they are kept abreast of their children's progress toward those expectations via conferences with advisors and via PupilPath online data and reports on their children's activities in all classes. They added that they are provided resources to work with their children at home and specifically pointed out a workshop that exposed them to the Cornell Note-taking tool during a curriculum night event.
Findings

Across grades and subject areas, all teachers engage in professional collaborations linked to accountable community meetings and protocols, with a focus on refining curricula and improving instruction across the school. Distributed leadership structures provide for teacher input in decisions about teaching and learning within the school community.

Impact

Teacher team collaborations and distributive leadership structures contribute to teacher voice in school level decision-making and support school goals such as improved teacher pedagogy and higher levels of student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade and department teacher teams engage in weekly inquiry-based activities on Mondays and Tuesdays. Teachers are grouped in interdisciplinary teams to promote focused discussions of student needs across disciplines, with specific attention to the students well below grade level in reading, as per DRP data and other diagnostic assessments. Meetings include teacher leaders from each grade, a guidance counselor and the principal who collaborate to provide credit accumulation and attendance data to inform discussions of students identified as being the most in need of intensive support. These activities are informing next steps in revising curricula and instruction for further alignment to Common Core standards and shifts, to improve teacher pedagogy and student achievement. These collaborations have contributed to achievement gains by some students, especially in grade ten, as evidenced by current student work and data from a 2016 DRP assessment.

- Teams use specific protocols when working on the identification of gaps in learning and revision of curriculum maps. There is a focus on building horizontal and vertical coherence in relation to what students need to know and do to make progress towards learning targets. At a team meeting, observed during the Quality Review, a group of teachers discussed ideas for lesson activities to build student capacity to conduct and report on laboratory investigations that require them to make connections between claims, hypotheses, evidence, and conclusions. Participants described how similar team meetings help to improve their practice and alignment of curricula to the instructional shifts. Teachers are infusing more tasks that require in-depth writing across content areas and sharing ideas for implementing AVID and Cornell Note-taking practices across the school.

- Grade and department leaders and leaders of teams such as recruitment, afterschool events, attendance, technology, and college awareness, collaborate regularly with administrators in making decisions about a variety of schoolwide activities. These leaders have input in decisions such as selection of curriculum resources and help set the agenda for the weekly team meetings. The principal works directly with them to coordinate schoolwide professional development related to the needs of ELLs and students with disabilities. Further, teacher leaders help to strengthen teacher pedagogy in relation to targeted elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Data from the principal indicates that some teachers are already beginning to show improvement in student engagement, one of the targeted components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching.