Quality Review Report
2016-2017

The Urban Assembly School for Emergency Management
High school 02M135
411 Pearl St.
Manhattan
NY 10038

Principal: Rodolfo Elizondo

Dates of Review:
October 17, 2016 - October 18, 2016

Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth
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 Emergency Management serves students in grade 9 through grade 12. 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

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Proficient</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>
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</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>Additional Finding</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>
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</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>
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<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</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>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 leaders and faculty ensure curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate four key instructional priorities across grades and content such that tasks are planned and refined using student work and data analysis.

Impact

Four focused instructional priorities are coherently embedded across grades and subjects to promote college and career readiness for all students. Additionally, unit and planning documents including a consistent daily flow, are created to provide access for all students to be cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Uniform templates have been adopted by the vast majority of teachers for use when planning both unit and individual periods of instruction. An element of the lesson plan protocol includes clearly stated lesson overviews, which identify learning targets intended to be answerable by students in the form of an “I can” statement. Examples include, “I can define homeostasis and provide examples of how organisms maintain it.” and “I can connect advances in technology and modern fire dynamics to changes in the organizational structure, and tactical approach of the Fire Department of New York.” A review of many instructional planning documents demonstrates adoption of the protocols and practices that promote college and career readiness for all students.

- Within each lesson plan, a standard flow of events, referred to as the daily flow, has been adopted to ensure students know what to expect in every classroom during instructional time. The daily flow was developed, implemented, and refined through collaborative efforts of teachers and leadership to maximize coherence and alignment with the Common Core Learning Standards while addressing the highly effective skills as outlined in the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Routines embedded within the daily flow include opportunities for students to engage in meaningful and relevant do now activities, independent work to initiate higher-order thinking, and periodic checks for understanding measuring comprehension of the instructional objective(s).

- Lesson and unit plans are refined using collected student work samples, including both formative and summative assessments. Teachers alter their weekly lesson plans based on the collection of exit tickets from the prior lesson and assessment results. This information is also used to strategically group students according to their needs so they remain cognitively engaged. A lesson plan in math identified specific students who will receive scaffolded notes based on their performance on a graphing unit exam. A weekly unit plan in social studies indicates students who struggle with the exit ticket question will meet briefly with the teacher to reintroduce and elicit responses from them regarding the learning target; because although students understand the different views of government, they may not be capable of making connections to their own life experiences.

- Cross-walks have been conducted aligning the Common Core Learning Standards and the Career Technical Education (CTE) standards for application with capstone projects and assessments. Projects are used to focus instructional priorities in select courses, such as, Advanced Placement Environmental Science and Emergency Management. Real world applications include a focus on hazardous materials, hurricane recovery, and waste management. Several students shared the capstone projects explicitly challenge them intellectually.
Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a set of adopted instructional priorities about how students learn best as observed in student work products and purposeful small group discussions.

Impact
Students produce meaningful work products and high levels of student thinking and participation, although lack demonstration of instructional ownership across classes.

Supporting Evidence

- The instructional priorities for all classes include a focus on checks for understanding, literacy, student engagement, and clearly defined learning targets. These adopted priorities were coherent throughout all classes and provided students opportunities to produce meaningful student work; although in some classes a few students were not as engaged as others limiting their critical thinking and demonstration of content. In an English class, students reflected on their draft of a perspective narrative and planned to redraft using more figurative language. Students discussed how they were going to use figurative language in their writing and provided specific examples from their paragraphs in small groups. In a global history class, students collect text-based evidence of technological advancements from civilizations during the Age of Exploration through readings and a jigsaw activity. However, in a math class, limited discussion and minimal agreement and understanding of individual computations led to student confusion.

- Students were arranged in small groups in all classes to promote discussion and critical thinking, often strategically to support the needs of individual learner’s literacy competency. Students in a history class used cite specific evidence from primary and secondary sources to understand the conflicts between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton. Students explained how they annotated their notes using their literary sources and charted differences for inclusion when developing their essay. Students engaged in critical thinking discussions purposely knowing it is an instructional focus expected of them as communicated by the teacher. Most discussions in other classes reflected a similar instructional focus on attempts at rich discussions, although in an emergency management class, several groups did not include all members, even though specific roles were assigned for completion of the task.

- The instructional protocol dictates each instructional period begins with a do now. All classes visited and lesson plans reflected that practice. The do now is strategically used to engage students in meaningful and relevant work prior to instruction of the lesson objective. In a science lesson, the teacher recognized that students did not complete one component of an assigned activity. As such, she modified her instruction and redirected them to complete those required steps and assisted them in annotating their reference table. However, in several other classes, the do now was not completed in its entirety by some students or in an independent nature, thus limiting opportunities for those respective students to engage in sharing their understanding of the task.
**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**

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and have adopted a grading policy uniformly implemented in all classes. Additionally, common assessments are administered in all courses to measure student progress.

**Impact**

Actionable feedback is provided to teachers regarding their students’ performance from various checks for understanding and assessments. Results from these measures are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers administer benchmark exams for predictive precision intended to prepare students for culminating course assessments, including the Regents exams. Analysis of data from these ready exams, as they are known among students and staff, have a five percent reliability accuracy as a predictive tool according to previously administered versions. They are administered twice a year and individual results are shared with the student for inclusion in their independently generated student led conference presentation. Students also use the results to address concepts that will assist them improve their core knowledge in the assessed content area. One English Language Learner (ELL) student who modeled her student-led conference stated she needed to change her geometry performance by asking additional questions, practice more, and appreciated the process for how it had a direct impact on her ability to speak to her work at school.

- An instructional priority for all students is an improvement in literacy. The belief that literacy is essential for all content areas is a core belief amongst teachers to be able to effectively support student performance coherently. Results from the most recent Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) assessments show a decrease of fifteen percent for students scoring below grade level.

- A uniform grading policy exists for all courses purposefully to measure student progress and hold teachers accountable for promoting student growth. Students recognize and can speak to an understanding of the grading policy components, including the role summative and formative assessments play in generating their quarterly grades. Results from assessments are used to adjust curriculum and students are often provided an opportunity to be reassessed if performance is below expectations. Teachers use assessment results to redirect instruction or provide extra help opportunities until their students “get it right.”

- Common assessments are used by teachers to group students and develop intervention protocols where necessary. For example, English Language Arts (ELA) Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) disaggregated trait data is used to show growth among all students including students with disabilities and ELL students. The most recently administered benchmark results show an average increase for all grade nine students of seven percent with reading text dependent questions and forty-four percent for counterclaims from the previously administered benchmark.

- Feedback from classroom assessments are provided to teachers and students to inform them of current achievement levels. For example, in science, students can follow their progress towards lab time requirement using an online platform.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff through a focus on four instructional priorities. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career.

Impact
A system of accountability is in place and training is provided through feedback and professional development to ensure high expectations are maintained. Additionally, families understand their child’s progress towards college and graduation through ongoing feedback.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are provided access to information which communicates the instructional priorities and conveys expectations regularly through an email, the Daily Blast. The Daily Blast also communicates information regarding announcements, happenings, and other relevant events. A recent Daily Blast included several shout outs for teachers who opened their classroom as a lab, volunteered for the high school fair, or facilitated “a great Socratic discussion.” A similar communication known as the Friday Flash is used to inform families of school happenings and opportunities. Parents unanimously agreed that the Friday Flash is how they get a lot of information related to school happenings. An online grading platform is regularly used by most families to inform them of their child’s academic status in all classes.

- The faculty handbook provided to all staff requires a signature of acknowledgment that they act in accordance with the mission, vision, and core values contained in their handbook. Expectations include participation in ongoing professional learning focused on developing technical expertise, reflective practices, research, collaboration, and student support. Several staff members who have been encouraged to attend specific ongoing learning have shared their expertise at weekly professional development sessions.

- Core values are communicated to staff regularly and commonly referred to as the resilient, empathetic, achievement-oriented, deliberate, and your own ally (READY) values. An online platform is also used for teachers to collect supplemental resources which are designed to enhance their instructional practices such as developing literacy and improving writing strategies, or learning of additional scaffolds when planning lessons. Teachers regularly refer to the Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) handbook as a professional source to improve collaborations, student engagement, and student scholarship.

- Ongoing training exists for teachers to develop their understanding of instructional priorities and expectations. An increase in assessment scores is correlated with teacher trainings focused on improved attendance and one-on-one curriculum planning meetings. Several trainings offered were developed based on teacher feedback which they felt would yield the most impact with their instruction, such as improvements in horizontal collaborations and creating supportive celebratory environments.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

Findings

Feedback to teachers from the cycle of observations captures strengths, challenges, and next steps and is used to effectively design and facilitate professional development and make informed decisions.

Impact

Feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice and is communicated regularly through various electronic and verbal methods to support teacher development. Focus on the instructional priorities is promoted through targeted professional growth as a result of analysis from observations.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of recently conducted observations model a uniform template adopted by school leadership which provide valuable feedback to all teachers. Evaluator notes include commendations, next steps, and additional information directly related to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Next steps often include an expectation for implementation of the suggested practices as the cycle of observations continue. Support may include collaboration with a colleague for additional peer advisement and support.

- Teachers who had received multiple observations with feedback requesting specific areas showed improvements from developing to effective ratings, or effective to highly effective. For example, one teacher’s structure for grouping and use of engagement limited student thinking. In the subsequent observation, it is noted that student thinking was made more visible by purposeful writing and small group discussions, including turn and talk.

- Professional development is differentiated for teachers and designed purposefully based on analysis of trends in teacher competency and progress in accordance with the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The use of a digital platform has provided administration with snapshots of all teacher observations and more specific insight to the areas requiring the most growth and attention. Several teachers were provided differentiated professional development focused on specific interventions, including reference to the ICT Playbook.

- The role of the professional development committee, according to several members, is to identify needs based on trends from teacher observations, teacher feedback, credit accumulation, and design appropriate professional development. The professional development committee suggested offering a variety of workshops which would support teachers in conducting a lesson study embedding the training concepts.
**Additional Finding**

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

All teachers are engaged in structured instructional teacher teams and consistently analyze student work and assessment data.

**Impact**

The instructional capacity of teachers is increased through the promotion of instructional strategies during analysis of student work samples leading to improved progress for groups of students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Math co-teachers discussed their noticings of student misconceptions during a teacher team meeting. The teachers created two groups of student work samples using previously taught lesson exit tickets. The findings will be used to reteach and incorporate strategies for specific students during extra-help. The planned lesson for the following day will also be modified to address some of the observed gaps in understanding graphing for some students during the beginning of class. The teachers further stated they hope they can now anticipate some of the changes that students will need moving forward.

- Teachers shared their instruction has improved in part due to their participation and facilitation in professional learning and weekly departmental collaborations. At the beginning of the year, diagnostic assessments were administered to all students in all content areas. During common planning times, teachers identify strategies using the ICT playbook and research-based practices which will best support observed deficiencies. For example, teachers shared they value reading in every class and have implemented vocabulary cards, Frayer models, and accountable talk strategies to help support improved student thinking. Teachers provided data reports that demonstrate growth in literacy of more than ten percentage points from students successfully answering questions more accurately on a follow up benchmark assessment of the same standards.

- A review of prior meeting minutes revealed a focus on adjusting the pace and sequencing of a math unit permitting students time to simultaneously work on better understanding how to solve and graph equations using instructional tools. Additional minutes from grade level meetings highlight a focus on discussion protocols to help students who need additional supports. The overall consensus was that teachers were able to improve their teaching practice and get to know their students better by analyzing formative and summative assessment results.