Quality Review Report

2016-2017

The Urban Assembly School for Global Commerce

High School 05M157
2005 Madison Ave.
Manhattan
NY 10035

Principal: Erin Gehant

Dates of Review:
February 14, 2017 - February 15, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Tracie Benjamin-Van Lierop
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 Global Commerce 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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the schools instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<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>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rating:</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings

School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning and they consistently communicate a collective set of high expectations for all students, providing clear, focused, and effective guidance supports.

Impact

The school community successfully partners with families to support student progress toward post-secondary expectations. Students, including high-need subgroups, own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School administrators, teachers, and guidance staff meet at the end of each marking period to review student data and engage in graduation and post-secondary planning for their students. Families and the guidance team meet regularly to discuss next steps in moving toward graduation. A parent commented, “At one point, I noticed our bulletin boards were not an accurate representation of what our students can do and I mentioned this at a School Leadership Team (SLT) meeting, and by the next meeting, our bulletin boards looked much better.” As a result of this conversation and in partnership with parents, a 90/90 bulletin board was created to recognize students who have a 90 grade point average and 90 percent attendance.

- Some parents who have had children in the school since ninth grade and who will be graduating in June stated that the school has come a long way. One parent said, “Classroom management was not great and structures didn’t seem to be in place.” Another shared “The principal, some teachers, and support staff was really the keys to the school moving forward and most importantly, they listen to us.” Parents all agreed that the staff takes the post-secondary success of their children and all students very seriously and personally. Teachers and guidance staff provided parents with a workshop on PupilPath, an on-line grading system for parents and students to keep track of student academics and attendance. Some parents commented that they preferred the school’s previous on-line grading platform and that they were in communication with school leadership regarding receiving more training on PupilPath to gain a better understanding of how to navigate the grading system and communicate with teachers electronically. Students spoke about meeting with teachers one-to-one before, during and after school to discuss their grades and create action plans so they are prepared for the next grade, college and career.

- Students participate in internships with the New York City (NYC) Department of Transportation, NYC’s Summer Youth Program, and Literacy Leaders, a program in collaboration with NYC public schools in which high school students tutor students in elementary school while earning one English Language Arts (ELA) elective credit. Students also participate in NYC and State public university campus visits and have been exposed to programs that provide access, academic support and financial aid to young people who show promise for succeeding in college but who may not have otherwise been offered admission.

- Students on the robotics team had the opportunity to present in the NYC FIRST® Science and Technology College and Career Expo, which included exhibitors, colleges and universities, and corporations, informing students about careers in science and technology. The team won the rookie all-star award for the NYC Regional Competition, which is the highest honor given to any rookie team and allowed the team to qualify for a robotics competition championship in St. Louis, Missouri.
FINDINGS

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide scaffolds and multiple entry points into the curricula. Student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

IMPACT

Students are not consistently engaged in appropriately challenging tasks or demonstrating higher-order thinking skills in their work products, as the needs of some learners are not being met.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

- The lesson’s learning objective in an ELA class was to refine a strong thesis statement and organize compelling evidence. Students worked independently, in pairs, or in a group. Several students explained why they thought their thesis statements were strong or needed improvement, which was supported by their work products. There were a few students in one group who struggled to articulate what they needed to do in order to refine their thesis statements and their work products reflected their learning gap. The teacher circulated around the room while challenging students to support their thinking and asked “Why is it important that your thesis statement provides substance for analysis?”, “Why should we avoid plot summary?”, and “Why do we not need two pieces of evidence to provide the same idea?” The teacher facilitated the conversation, enabling students to drive the verbal exchange and build on one another’s responses. Conversely, in a global studies class, the teacher asked questions that did not require students to think critically. Questions included, “Does anyone remember what this structure is?”, “Is this a cruel punishment?”, and “Did they do this in a separate space?”

- Students in a Living Environment class engaged in station work centered on how cells, organelles and their functions work to maintain homeostasis. The lesson included multiple entry points utilizing various stations. They included a reading station on mitosis and another on the organization of the stages of cell division, where students had to arrange the cells into the correct order and correctly label what stage each cell was in. At another station, students watched a computerized interactive video depicting the process of mitosis and cytokinesis and answered three analysis questions. While students were engaged and the learning target was connected to the lesson’s objective, some students did not understand the objective of each station’s task as evidenced by work products consisting of one-word responses or none at all.

- Students in a communications class evaluated which piece of evidence best supported the topic sentence, “Converting non-Muslims has been an important part of Islamic culture from the beginning of the religion and this has impacted the societies it has come in contact with.” Students also had to explain the reasoning behind their answers. Students then moved to different stations to agree or disagree with claims using reliable texts for evidence. The tasks increased in complexity at each station. The teacher created an evidence quality checklist to guide students and also integrated current events regarding fake news and alternative facts.

- In an algebra class, students graphed the solutions to linear inequalities with two variables. While students worked independently on their worksheets, the quality of the student responses varied. When some students were asked to explain their inequality solutions, they were unable to articulate their thinking. There were missed opportunities to have students share their thinking with their peers. Additionally, although students were seated in groups, their collaboration was limited.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all students.

Impact

Purposeful decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. The curricula are accessible to a variety of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is comprised of 27 percent students with disabilities and nine percent English Language Learners (ELLs) and promotes student placement in the least restrictive environment, including Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) settings. Teachers use an ICT planning and accommodations lesson plan document when designing their lessons together. The planning form includes the learning target, pacing options such as extended time requirements, scheduled breaks, and the provision of extra cues or prompts. Other teaching strategies in the planning document included the presentation of subject matter, materials, and the co-teaching style to be used for each component of the lesson: the do now, lesson activity, independent practice, and closing. The plan also memorializes what both the content teacher and the special education teacher are doing throughout the lesson. Examples included in the curricula varied from one teacher teaching while the other teacher collects purposeful data to both teachers instructing the class together for group instruction. In an Environmental Science and Career and Technical Education (CTE) lesson on how teenagers can positively affect their community using science and engineering, the plan included considerations and visual options for ELLs as well as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic supports for students with disabilities.

- Writing across the grades focuses on narrative, argumentative, and expository works. In grade nine, students focus on ideas, synthesis and relative evidence in addition to argumentative writing where students create stronger claims, organize their writing and find relevant supporting evidence. Whereas, in grade 11, students continue to deepen their narrative and expository writing by integrating text-to-world connections and characterization. By grade 12, students analyze literature for key themes, connect it to real-world scenarios and write responses using evidence from fiction and non-fiction text. By the end of twelfth grade, students present an oral defense of their dissertation on the role of a value in their life and philosophy of self.

- The school’s CTE Virtual Enterprise unit plan includes the analysis of how different forms of business ownership, government regulations, and business ethics affect entrepreneurial enterprises. Topics included in the plan were the changing United States (US) job market, the role of business in the US economy, forms of business ownership, ethics, and social responsibility. Students review case studies, analyze job posts and salary requirements for specific industries, and research and analyze company logistics in order to improve operations. The summative project includes students establishing a clear understanding of government rules and regulations as they apply to their business and development of an employee policy handbook. Another summative assessment option has students complete a global marketing strategy plan using their targeted consumers to develop the strategy.
**Findings**

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

**Impact**

Limited feedback on work products provided to students regarding their achievement results in a lack of actionable feedback to students and teachers. Teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet students’ learning needs.

**Supporting Evidence**

- A review of student work included feedback that ranged from providing students with a check mark or an “x” to feedback that included an acknowledgement of a student’s effort along with specific, actionable, and meaningful feedback that resulted in a student’s grade increasing from proficient to excellent on an argumentative essay in ELA. Students commented that most of their projects or assignments are connected to a rubric and they all understood the purpose of a rubric. However, students said the feedback from their teachers across subject areas varied. The one subject area where students agreed they received the most feedback that helped them to improve their grade was in ELA, especially in Advanced Placement English Language and Composition.

- A speech analysis essay on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. included feedback that encouraged the student to use more transition words in specific sections of the essay, adding quotes to strengthen the analysis, and a reminder to follow all the steps on the checklist. ELA student work on the bulletin board included actionable feedback on an assignment asking students, “What statement is Shakespeare making about dishonesty in Othello and how does he use dramatic irony as a tool to communicate those ideas?” Whereas, in a science class, a review of student work portfolios included limited feedback on some work products and none on others.

- While teachers use checks for understanding during their lessons, the instructional adjustments to address students’ learning needs are inconsistent. In a communications class, the teacher used an electronic data collector to determine next instructional steps. The teacher was able to gauge from the student responses on the screen that students had a clear understanding of the concept being taught. However, in an ICT class, teachers asked questions such as, “Does Andrew Carnegie ring a bell for anyone?”, “What do you call one person who owns a lot of business?”, and “Are we all good on this paragraph?” These questions did not assess the depth of student learning of the content being taught. Student responses were limited and did not indicate whether they understood the lesson.
Additional Finding

**Quality Indicator:** 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision  
**Rating:** Proficient

### Findings

School leaders support the development of teachers, including those new to the profession, with effective feedback and next steps. Feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

### Impact

Frequent cycles of classroom observation and analysis of student work and data elevate schoolwide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection. Teacher feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice and supports teacher development.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has eight new teachers this year who are each partnered with a mentor and meet monthly. The principal meets with both mentors and new teachers to ensure they are collaborating and sharing best practices and that compliance data is entered into the mentoring website. Methods of observation and feedback are provided via informal and formal observations, brief 10 to 15 minute walkthrough observations of multiple classrooms over one or more periods, and peer observations. The observation plan is organized into time frame, focus of feedback, goals, and purpose. Cycle one feedback, for example, included classroom routines, classroom environment, planning and preparation, and student engagement. The purpose centered on providing all teachers with evaluative feedback and school-wide feedback on growth.

- In preparation for observation debrief meetings, there are expectations for both the teacher and school leader before, during, and after the observation. The principal reviews roster and grade book data on Skedula, a school management system, in preparation for the observation. During the observation, there is a focus on low inference data collection on teachers as facilitators as they lead students through the learning process, including the development of student-to-student feedback, student engagement in evaluative thinking, and students taking on leadership roles. Teachers come to the pre-observation meeting prepared to speak about their glows and grows within the context of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. After the observation, the teacher and principal collaborate, when appropriate, on next steps and a timeline for improvement, identify resources to support improvement, and determine next observation time. The final step is for the principal to memorialize next steps and timeline in TeachBoost, a customizable instructional leadership platform, and share with the teacher who will implement the next steps and reach out for support, as needed.

- Classroom observation reports accurately capture the strengths of teachers’ instructional practices and their areas of challenge along with next steps. The areas of growth for most of the teachers observed during the review identified using questioning and discussion techniques and using assessment in instruction as ‘developing’. The areas where teachers tended to be rated ‘effective’ were in creating an environment of respect and rapport, managing student behavior, and designing coherent instruction. An example of next steps for a teacher noted, “Ensure that you embed a check for understanding after the mini-lesson and at the end of the lesson in the form of an exit slip. Use that information to guide your instructional planning.”
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the 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 instructional capacity of teachers is strengthening, typically resulting in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers state they have benefited from the time spent collaborating with their colleagues on both their academic department teams and grade level teams. The analysis of student work, mock Regents exams, and the sharing of best practices have contributed to teacher growth in domain 3b, Using questioning and discussion techniques, of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Eighty-six percent of teachers were rated developing and five percent were rated effective during cycle one. In cycle three, 14 percent were rated highly effective, 27 percent were rated effective, and 55 percent were rated developing. Observed team agendas and minutes included a problem of practice, a review of student work guided by use of a looking at student work protocol, and next steps. During a science team meeting, the inquiry targeted why students were passing classes but not their Regents exams. Teachers determined they needed to move toward using more consistent feedback strategies, common feedback rubrics for all assessments, and using feedback to drive performance on Regents exams.

- During the ELA team meeting, teachers discussed how to establish common systems of writing that help students improve their craft while working alongside the social studies department. Teachers based their next steps on the student work they reviewed, an argumentative essay incorporating two articles. The topic question was “Has young adult fiction become too dark and controversial for teenagers to read?” Teachers noted that students struggle with writing a counterclaim, grammar, and utilizing the rubric. One of the recommendations stated by a teacher was to provide additional scaffolds and graphic organizers. Another teacher respectfully pushed his colleagues thinking and commented, “Let’s remember not to provide too many scaffolds for our students as we don’t want to provide a crutch for them that they will not have in the future.” Teachers agreed with their colleague while also pushing each other to be more consistent with the level of feedback being provided to students.

- Teachers overwhelmingly agreed that a planning document that their colleague, who is new to the school community, shared with them has been a helpful resource in planning for their classes while also improving their practice, especially in their ICT classes. One teacher stated, “Although this was a tool created by and for special educators, it is a tool that I can also use and I’m a general education teacher.”