Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Urban Assembly Maker Academy
High school 02M282
411 Pearl St.
Manhattan
NY 10038

Principal: Luke Bauer

Dates of Review:
November 1, 2016 - November 2, 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

Urban Assembly Maker Academy 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>To what extent does the school...</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>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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Proficient</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 school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

Findings

Structures are in place which promote the school’s approach to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support.

Impact

A safe environment and inclusive culture that is conducive to student and adult learning exist and an advisory period built into the master schedule ensures that each student is known well by at least one adult who helps coordinate attendance, social-emotional learning, and guidance supports.

Supporting Evidence

- An Advisory Coordinating Team (ACT) exists to develop behavioral and academic progress for students and their families through regular meetings and professional development by and with advisors. Structured advisor supports are in place focused around building an understanding of individualized progress plans, the use of academic and behavioral data, and building awareness of student and grade-wide areas for improvement. Advisors serve as the primary contact for students and their families to understand expectations related to developing a strong school culture, minimizing referrals, and creating an environment where social-emotional learning exists. All students have an advisor with whom they meet in grade nine and ten four times a week and in grade eleven two times a week. Students stated that advisory is like a small community and supports them in dealing with problems in a structured manner.

- Students unanimously agree they feel safe and that their learning environment treats them with respect. In addition, students refer to their teachers and other staff personal on a first name basis, teachers regularly discuss individual students during weekly Kid Talk meetings. Protocols and structures for Kid Talks exist to identify strategic, measurable, attainable, real, and targeted goals, so students feel successful and remain engaged with their learning. An observation of a Kid Talk demonstrated discussions is intended to increase the attendance and positive reinforcement of one student. Strategies were identified and an action plan was developed for implementation with a six-week progress monitoring and review of impact. Additional Kid Talk agenda and minutes identify similar strategies and measures for impact on individual students related to improving credit accumulation and tardiness.

- Structures within the students’ schedule offer them the opportunity to conduct student led meetings. Students facilitate the meetings and are provided guidance to engage in discussions about issues that are important to them while incorporating college and career learning skills; including listening, responsibility, respect, empathy, and how to prioritize information. Recent student led meeting discussions have focused on the election, gender neutral bathrooms, and transgender views. Students communicated they understood how opportunities for personalized student led meetings supported their ability to think about other important current events and age appropriate sensitive issues.

- Parents agreed that their children are treated with respect and the building is secure. They specifically stated, attention is prioritized near stairwells, and during the passing between classes in the halls. They also felt the presence of building leadership along with teachers that are attentive and willing to step in. This results in each student feeling comfortable while remaining anonymous should a difficult situation arise that requires privacy.
Findings

Across classrooms, many newly acquired professionals are attempting to align their instruction to the curricula and beginning to develop student work products and discussions that are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts.

Impact

Students work products generated in classrooms reflect uneven levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Attention to the Danielson Framework for Teaching components, although identified and referred to in lesson planning documents and discussions with various staff members, was not consistently observed throughout classes. In the majority of the classes observed, students were not able to generate student work that reflected high levels of student thinking and participation. During an English Language Arts (ELA) lesson, students were prompted to provide feedback to a partner on a writing sample using a rubric and set a goal for improving their work based on their partner’s written feedback. Upon completion of the task, most students wrote on collected post-its how they met their instructional goal for the day. Some students identified how they completed their two paragraphs or will use the graphic organizer to assist them. Others wrote they will compete their work because they need them for another class, but will have to ask the teacher for assistance. Conversely, in other classes students engaged in either low-level critical thinking discussions with minimal content references or passively allowed other group members to complete the work. For example, in a social studies class, students tasked with identifying a problem, weakness, and solution based on an assigned reading passage, spent more time managing the transition and task than answering the prompts. In a science class, although students collected some data points during an investigation, it was unclear how they were critically reflecting on their data or making connections to expected outcomes, as evident by most students’ inability to answer the teacher’s question regarding “What are the representations we are to do?”

- Oral and written communications from teachers often did not provide clear structures for the majority of students to engage in their assignment with true understanding. Students required the task to be restated either on an individual basis, in a small group, or as a whole class. Teachers repeated their questions and task expectations in an attempt to clarify the learning target when students appeared off task or confused. During an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) math class, students were asked to identify the difference between a level two and three using the provided rubric. However, students exhibited a lack of knowledge as evident by the teacher calling on several students and needing to repeat the question four times prior to finding a student with the answer. When the teacher followed up asking, “Does anyone want to add another verb?” no students contributed. Other classes exhibited similar needs for directions and procedures to be clarified after initial student confusion.

- Grouping of students occasionally supported the instructional goals of the lesson and other times was based on random assignment or student location for convenience. However, even when students were grouped purposefully, limits on the quantity of materials (i.e. laptops or motion cars) provided supporting the learning objective or requiring templates to be created first (i.e. graphs or charts), limited students’ ability to participate in the task in a timely and engaging way.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders and faculty ensure that the Mastery-based Learning curriculum is aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards, integrating the instructional shifts through purposeful decisions. Additionally, the performance tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subject for students.

Impact

Coherence and the promotion of college and career readiness is planned for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum maps have been generated and align to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts purposefully to promote mastery based learning across all grades and content areas. Expectations for unit planning and classroom artifacts are identified by performance tasks all students must complete. Professional development and common planning time during the year and over the summer focus on identifying the tasks, including additional supporting tasks, students will complete during grades nine through eleven and the soon to be first graduating class of seniors in the 2017-2018 school year. This work is rooted in research of what a student should experience for college and career readiness and in accordance with industry partnership suggestions. Tasks include but are not limited to: literary analysis, math modeling, debate, and multimedia presentations.

- Entry documents, which may include a video or experience, establish the context, constraints, and real world application of the standard(s) necessary to demonstrate mastery within each unit. A physics unit on energy provided an argument (entry document), introducing students to the use of energy in their everyday life. The entry document identified what students will study, including bolded vocabulary words in the narrative and how students will be able to explain and make predictions using various forms of representations based on their experience. An ELA entry document identified a focus on close reading, annotation, and writing of evidence based claims. Students overwhelmingly stated the curriculum’s focus on standards and mastery based learning was the primary reason they choose to attend the school.

- Curriculum planning documents reflect assignments, assessments, and tasks called “At Bats” focused on student’s ability to demonstrate higher-order skills and rigorous habits associated with skills necessary for higher education and careers. One At Bat and performance task required students to choose two case studies, conduct a close reading, annotate, and then write a report based on their findings. Common Core Learning Standards were identified and a rubric accompanied each individual assignment (eight in total) for submission in completing the At Bat. Similar At Bats were developed and provided to all students across all content areas and is graded using the online platform for curriculum, which also includes structures for teacher feedback.

- A common lesson plan template has been adopted by teachers which include clear identification of relevant standards, learning target, and checks for understanding; which are all part of the instructional priorities surrounding the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP). However, some of the lesson activities do not fully align with the intended standard or learning target to be taught. For example, a social studies lesson designed to have students highlight ways that race has been discussed in the recent election, uses Saturday Night Live skits as the instructional tool to promote discussion. Although an anticipated misconception is identified around understanding the difference between comedy and racism, it is not clear how that misconception will be addressed.
**Additional Finding**

**Quality Indicator:** 2.2 Assessment

**Rating:** Proficient

**Findings**

Across grades and subject areas, teachers use and develop performance tasks with rubrics for assessment and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula and use normed common assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

**Impact**

Actionable feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement where the results are also used to adjust curricula and instruction.

**Supporting Evidence**

- A core belief foundational to the theory of action held by staff and building leadership, is the purposeful use of assessment to guide students to learn mastery through tasks which provide feedback on their achievement. As such, assessments are integrated into every unit in the form of a performance task which measures student’s application of industry and thinking skills and knowledge. Student’s level of knowledge is then tracked using a digital platform so teachers can adjust curricula and instruction either individually or for groups of students. Students who have not mastered a standard are listed with their current proficiency Level 1-4 for each course. Additionally, a color chart is generated listing each student by learning outcome standard and their proficiency level as green, yellow, or red. Teachers use the chart to determine standards that students have demonstrated mastery of, or are in need of immediate attention; as was demonstrated with a science foundation’s chart using Next Generation Science Standards.

- Common nationally recognized standards based assessments, such as the Degrees of Reading Progress (DRP) and Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), are administered three times a year to all students. Frequently administered progress monitoring assessments are used, additionally, throughout the year to measure a few purposefully identified Common Core Learning Standards which are most aligned with showing an impact on the NWEA MAP and DRP. Two pivotal skills assessed across all content areas are citing textual evidence and using inference to rephrase content. In all classes observed, students were challenged with using those skills as part of their instruction. Current results from the most recent assessment administration show an increase in the DRP for students in grades nine and ten at three years of growth and two years of growth respectively.

- Rubrics are incorporated into almost all learning tasks and align to the learning task and Common Core Learning Standards. Students shared samples of rubrics they use in class and could explain how they provide an understanding of expectations. Students also referred to the rubric and standards as a tool to guide them towards increased achievement. For example, several students stated the feedback provided on their assignment aligned with the curriculum and rubric thus allowing them to make connections to developing better ideas and improving their writing accordingly. All students said the actionable feedback supported their understanding of what they could do better when they had not achieved mastery, however, few examples were provided to support student’s meaningful understanding of how feedback supported a clear portrait of mastery if they had achieved mastery according to the rubric.
Additional Finding

### Quality Indicator: 3.4 High Expectations

#### Rating: Proficient

**Findings**

Schools leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations through various media and the instructional day that are connected to a path to college and career readiness, and offer ongoing feedback. Additionally, teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

**Impact**

Expectations and how to progress towards them help families understand and prepare students for the next level of their educational experience through detailed feedback and guidance advisement.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Building leaders and teachers alike have expressed the purposeful attention on improving student attendance because it directly correlates with their expectations for all students to graduate college and career ready. Several initiatives have been implemented to ensure an increase in student tardiness and attendance with both students and families, having yielded nearly a four percent increase in the first two months of school based on previous findings and trends. Additionally, the number of students marked “absent” due to not being in period one or two has declined by nearly fifty students a day. Communications via text, automatic call systems, emails, and one-to-one phone conversations by staff, have all contributed to placement on the value of presence in class and led to an increase in attendance and culture of high expectations to learning for all students.

- Work-based learning and employment experiences are collected and tracked for students participating. Performance expectations are measured on a rubric and comments related to work readiness skills are monitored regularly. A non-Career and Technical Education (CTE) work-based learning tracker form inventories all related information to facilitate staff with supporting students’ experiences and holding them accountable for progress towards graduation.

- Students communicated how the guidance counselor, advisor, partnership coordinator, and college counselor all play an integral role in their preparation for the next step in their college or career aspirations. A college advisory curriculum exists for students to have opportunities to review their progress towards graduation, including auditing transcripts and understanding their credit accumulation. Grade eleven students communicated their junior year (current highest grade level in school since it is in its third year since inception) is “the most important,” and they are aware of plans even for students who may not be interested in attending college to go on alternative trips to industry partners, work on resume development, and discuss work experiences. Professional expectations are also discussed, such as how to send an email appropriately, dress, and conduct yourself in a competent and respectful manner. However, a few inconsistencies were observed throughout classes, as some students although may be experiencing professional expectation training, exhibited inappropriate use of language when completing assignments or talking with friends.

- Parents unanimously felt they are communicated with and included in all behavioral, academic, and cultural happenings related to their child’s learning. Academic expectations are uploaded and made available to progress monitor individual assignments. Emails and phone calls inform families of behavioral expectations, with relevant issues being discussed and collaborated on at School Leadership Team (SLT) and Parent Association meetings. Evening functions are held to provide college and career preparation and information to families and students.
Additional Finding

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<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

All teachers have common planning time built into their schedule for opportunities to engage in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures exist among all staff members.

Impact

Promotion of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers. Additionally, teachers have built leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Common planning time exists for all teachers so they have weekly opportunities to strengthen their pedagogy and professional collaborations. Teacher teams meet four times a week during the school day following a protocol. Expectations focus on using data to drive instruction thus improving their lesson planning and student achievement. Each subject area team generates measurable goals that are tracked and monitored collaboratively with leadership. The goals are developed in alignment with the CEP. The math department goal is expressed as, 80 percent of students will score at least 35 percent of the points on Constructed Response Regents. This goal was purposefully identified by teachers during summer inquiry team meetings and professional development where data analysis led them to indicate this would align most accurately with increased student performance.

- A review of teacher team meeting minutes across content areas, offers insight into the uniform protocol and adoption of norms teams follow. Each meeting addresses one of four focused lenses all participants are to be engaged with. The four focused lens are: a review of unit materials, lesson improvement, looking at student work, or data review. A recent English department meeting established measures to assess two standards for benchmarking student understanding using a short reading and writing assignment which requires students to select specific text evidence to support their claim. The science department normed a rubric using student work identified as low, medium, and high. They also worked on improving lessons by reviewing a project that did not work effectively last year when assigned to students. Several suggestions were provided including scaffolding the timeline and providing more structured detail regarding necessary elements required for inclusion and aligned to the rubric.

- Many staff members function in a multitude of positions impacting students which offer them opportunities to make key decisions in establishing policy related to the continued development of school practices and policies. A teacher leader has been assigned to work with colleagues in developing and improving student learning and engagement. A diversity collective has been established among teachers and faculty who want to discuss ways to assess and strengthen the school’s culture and inclusion for students and teachers of all races, genders, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background. All staff are assigned an advisory period and serve in the capacity of assisting students with their academic, social, and behavioral expectations. Other responsibilities where teachers have built in leadership include being involved on the hallway transition team, pupil personnel team, school implementation team, or behavioral team.