Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Urban Assembly Institute Of Math And Science For Young Women

Secondary School 13K527

283 Adams Street
Brooklyn
NY 11201

Principal: Kiri Soares

Dates of Review:
November 1, 2017 - November 2, 2017

Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth
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 Institute Of Math And Science For Young Women serves students in grade 6 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Area of Focus</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>Additional Finding</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 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>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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</tbody>
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### Systems for Improvement

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<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</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>Developing</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>Area of Celebration</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>Developing</td>
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<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>Developing</td>
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Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<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
School leaders support the development of teachers with effective, accurate, and timely feedback through formal and informal cycles of observations aligned with the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact
Instructional practices of increasing both students' discourse and their engaging in productive struggle are promoted and implemented through the clear articulation of expectations via observation feedback, thus supporting pedagogical development.

Supporting Evidence

- A cycle of inquiry supports elevating schoolwide instructional practices targeting selected components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and is in alignment with the instructional foci of reducing teacher talk and increasing student collaboration through reasoning and productive struggle. Feedback from school leaders to teachers shared on Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) evaluation forms are based on specific evidence collected during classroom visits. Rationale for the rating accompanies strengths and next steps. For example, a next step on one APPR form suggested increasing rigor by challenging students through application of their skills and new learning, making sure students have to use reason, thus fostering productive struggle.

- Timely post-observation conversations between school administration and teachers regarding specific best practices include feedback with recommendations of support, especially to improve future lesson planning. Teachers use the information from their formal and informal observations to develop goals that promote their professional growth. One teacher created a goal to embed more rigorous instruction using primary sources so students conduct more analysis and critical thinking with their work. Another teacher has created more student voice opportunities during his instructional delivery through planning table shares so students engage in demonstrating their thinking with their peers. School leaders and teachers agree overall that there has been an increase in teachers serving as facilitators, thus supporting a school instructional goal of having more student discourse.

- Teachers reflect on opportunities they create for students to manage their personal behavior, and ask questions and use discussion techniques to engage them actively in their learning. One teacher shared how prior observation feedback has helped her limit side conversations during Socratic seminars, thus enabling students to remain more focused on the question prompt. Another teacher expressed that written feedback from observations has improved her questioning technique. Previously, both the teacher and her students used too many low-level Webb's Depth of Knowledge questions. However now, there is a conscious effort to increase the level of complexity. As such, feedback teachers receive from their observations and their inquiry work, has led to an increase in their professional growth as evident by subsequent observations.
### Area of Focus

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

Curricula and academic tasks reflect planning as a result of teachers conducting lesson rehearsals with department peers, although the level of rigor modeled and planned for is inconsistent across lesson plans.

#### Impact

A variety of learners are not provided targeted access through rigorous instruction and well-planned supports to cognitively engage them in the curricula.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Differentiated instruction, adjustments to lessons, and/or accommodations for diverse learners, to ensure all students have access to learning through purposeful scaffolds and supports are lacking in most lesson planning documents, especially for students with disabilities. For example, most students in a grade six math lesson plan are recommended for “lighter and heavier support approaches to be used with students when appropriate.” Similar support approaches throughout most curricular documents, are not purposeful or support higher-order thinking.

- Groups of teachers rehearse and review lesson plans in advance of their implementation to identify existing misconceptions and revise questions and student learning opportunities. Collegial suggestions guide the adjustments. However they are not based on student work or data and therefore do not ensure a diversity of learners have access to the curricula so tasks are cognitively engaging for all.

- Structures are in place for staff to develop lesson plans coherently using an online forum. A review of unit planning documents demonstrate improved student engaging tasks as compared to previously developed unit plans. The newly adopted template identifies what task, skills, instruction, and result students will experience as an outcome of the learning experience. However, the process and protocol is still being developed across some grades and content areas so that all students will have access. For example, a unit plan developed for students to explore the development of the Constitution, lacks higher-order thinking tasks that are associated with the various learning objectives.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, student work products and thinking are inconsistently supported by efforts to engage students in discussions and differentiated tasks, especially those students classified as students with disabilities.

Impact

There are uneven levels of engagement with appropriately challenging tasks and uneven demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in student work products as reflected by student thinking and participation across classes.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classes, most students did not evenly engage in high levels of student thinking. Although teachers sometimes involved students with questions to make their thinking visible during small group discussions, most students sat quietly and did not partake in the discussion. Students engaged in a conversation during a grade seven English lesson to determine how authors convey meaning in a poem using metaphors. Students reflected on what their classmates said by agreeing or disagreeing by finding meaning using context clues found within the poem. However, most other classes demonstrated uneven levels of engagement and relied upon a few students to dominate and produce meaningful discussions. For example, during a science experiment, although groups of students predicted what would happen when warm and cold colored water were mixed together, they did not explain their reasoning. Similarly, a global studies lesson prompted students to reflect on two maps of Latin America, although no clear context was provided to guide their reflection, thus limiting their critical thinking and analysis.

- A social studies lesson intended for students to understand how the preamble was used by the founding fathers to establish our government concluded with the teacher asking students, “What type of laws, rules, and ideas will be in the Constitution based on the preamble?” However, the majority of students did not exert significant effort to think through relevant responses to develop a coherent thought as evident by the teacher subsequently stating, “Just take a guess, there is no right or wrong answer.” The only resource provided to all students was a leaflet of the Constitution and a worksheet to translate the preamble. Many students were not able to clearly define the words although given the context, nor were they provided resources to assist them in doing so. Thus, a lack of scaffolds and multiple entry points for most students led to missed opportunities in learning higher-order thinking skills and limited engagement.

- Across classes, all students used the same materials and resources to complete the learning objective, independent of their learning needs, either as a student with disabilities or a general education student. During a lesson on linear and exponential functions in an Integrated Collaborative Co-Teaching (ICT) class, all students were provided the same worksheet, with no additional structures to address the individual learning needs of students. Although most students could complete the task, it was not challenging for a majority of the students, while others who were unable to demonstrate how to solve the equations, simply copied the provided notes. Additionally, it was not clear how the worksheet supported students’ ability to model their thinking step-by-step, as most assessments require step-by-step showing of work, and not just an answer.
Additional Finding

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

Although rubrics are commonly referenced as a tool during assessment practices, they are loosely aligned with the curriculum and do not provide effective feedback, across most classes. Additionally, teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding during instruction.

Impact

Assessment practices using questioning are used in a limited capacity thus reducing effective feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. As such, adjustments are inconsistently implemented across classes to meet student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Opportunities to make adjustments during instruction exist for most teachers through checking students’ understanding by asking questions, specifically as teachers listen into groups of students. However, most teachers do not make effective adjustments for the majority of students based on the questioning approach used. For example, although a science teacher, based on her observation and discussion with several groups, paused an experiment where students were recording data measurements inaccurately, the added adjustment did not lead to students correctly recording or properly collecting data results. Similarly, during a math class, a teacher actively worked with some students to clarify their misunderstanding; however, many students in other groups who had similar misconceptions were not provided the needed clarification to help them demonstrate their understanding.

- Feedback provided to improve students’ work is inconsistent. Several students shared they are given rubrics with checks of their performance, but unaware how to revise their work or strategically use that information to improve similar tasks moving forward. For example, students generally noted they would just make sure they write more and answer the question better next time. Thus, the lack of specific feedback limits students’ opportunity to achieve at a higher level. Additionally, many students expressed that they receive the rubrics after they have begun their assignment, further limiting their understanding of the grading policy in advance of and supporting completing the assignment. Several students, who did perform well on their assignments according to the rubric criteria, were also limited in their ability to explain any next steps for further improvement with their work.

- Throughout classes, feedback to students was generic. During a science lesson, the teacher stated, “great responses” after listening to several groups discussing their findings, with no specific reference to a great response nor was any group asked to elaborate their answers with the class. During a math lesson, the teachers asked the students to clap if they all agree, although most students clapped, no subsequent questions followed to confirm understanding. The lack of positive use of checks for understanding via questioning and the use of generic language in response to student work, across classes, did not allow for effective adjustments to clarify most misconceptions or allow students to demonstrate an understanding.
Findings
School leaders communicate high expectations to the entire staff, and a culture for learning is developing connected to a path of college and career readiness for students that is being conveyed to their families.

Impact
Professional learning opportunities for staff to address and meet desired expectations are developing. Additionally, systems for families and students to receive progress measures and guidance are developing so that students are prepared for their next level and can achieve set expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- All staff receive information from school leadership regarding instructional goals centered on elevating student thinking through rigorous instruction. Each teacher is visited during classroom instruction time, in four to six week cycles, and feedback regarding the level of rigorous instruction is communicated. However, the look-fors and feedback has not yet led to desired increases in identified expectations. Professional development and peer-teacher training structures are in place to support meeting rigorous instruction, however, these supports do not fully achieve their desired outcome. For example, teachers review their lesson plans with peers and school leadership to identify student misconceptions, areas for strategic questions, and adjustments to material and resources. However, collegial lesson reviews have not led to increased student understanding and teachers effectively limiting student misconceptions, despite efforts to identify them in advance. Additionally, professional development sessions attended by some staff, has not yet led to coherence of instructional practices across grades.

- Families appreciate how teachers offer time before, during, and after school to assist their children in achieving success. Parents also value and appreciate the daily advisory period because it provides an opportunity for their children to receive tutoring after school. However, families overwhelmingly do not understand the expectations and progress their children need to be successful towards college and career. They acknowledge, “No news is good news.” Most parents have not received a call or communication from their child’s advisor nor have they attended any college workshops. Although information regarding online resources has been communicated, most parents felt they needed to speak with family and friends from outside of the school community who have experienced college applications to ensure their children are prepared for the application and selection process.

- Students have an advisor who is tasked with conducting individualized meetings to support their preparation for both academic and social development. The advisor provides structures, tutoring, guidance and advisement to help the student understand how to meet school expectations associated with college and career readiness. However, students do not agree the advisory period or other structures such as Girls Inc. deliver its intended outcome of providing support for life after high school. Some students expressed that the Girls Inc. opportunities have been incredibly rewarding and provided experiences that could not have been attained through any other organization, while others feel favoritism exists and the opportunities are not helpful to developing support for their life after high school. Thus, the existing structures do not yet fulfill the needs of all students.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

Teachers are engaged in weekly professional collaborations and are developing the use of an inquiry approach schoolwide.

Impact

Teacher teams are attempting to improve their instructional capacity by focusing on student achievement and lesson development, although results do not yet demonstrate progress towards improvement for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet regularly to engage in professional collaborations that support the values and goals defined by the school’s Comprehensive Education Plan. However, it is not clear how teams, specifically content teams, are improving instruction using an inquiry approach. Structures focus primarily on review of lesson planning and vaguely address the needs of students. Staff members note that their collaborations allow them “to think ahead of time and plan for rigor and know exactly what they want to come out of the lesson because I know we have talked and rehearsed…with every single lesson where students struggle and we can address misconceptions.” However, observation of an inquiry professional collaboration did not demonstrate achievement of this goal and thus limited future student learning opportunities.

- Staff uses their inquiry time to pace and guide aims for every lesson and make plans linked to what they have done and where they want to go with their instruction based on identified misconceptions. For example, a team of social studies teachers expressed how previously some students struggled to understand what the term “representation” meant. Once this was understood to be a misconception, the teachers planned to have a conversation with the students to see what they would understand based on how government works today and not in the 1700’s. Although student misconceptions are used to focus on improving learning, it is unclear how pre-planning misconceptions has consistently supported students making adequate progress across classes and grades with the content.

- Teachers reported inquiry work has afforded them the opportunity to build better relationships with students and staff because they are sharing professional and personal experiences, thus driving their own professional work and student academic achievement forward, although not for all subgroups of students. Specifically, teachers note they have identified strategies that have improved their teacher practice, such as asking higher-order questions and allowing for more student led discussions. However, these practices were not evident during observations in the majority of classes visited.