Quality Review Report

2018-2019

Urban Assembly School for Criminal Justice
Secondary School 20K609
4200 16 Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11204

Principal: Natalie Jufer

Dates of Review:
February 6, 2019 - February 7, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Glenda Esperance
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 School for Criminal Justice 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>Additional Finding</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>Additional Finding</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<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>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>Well Developed</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

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

Quality Indicator: 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision  
Rating: Well Developed

Findings
School leaders and teacher peers conduct frequent observations and provide on-going support to teachers. Feedback provided is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and is used to monitor teacher progress towards meeting their professional goals.

Impact
The observation process is a platform that promotes professional growth, self-reflection, and improved pedagogical practices.

Supporting Evidence

- During cabinet meetings, school leaders review teacher observation data, revisit teacher goals, and create mentoring plans when applicable. School administrators are normed to an established observation protocol and adhere to an observation schedule that is designed to ensure strategic and frequent classroom visits. School leaders conduct both announced and unannounced observations as a team and they prioritize classroom visits based on teachers’ demonstrated needs. There is a post observation conference with teachers after every visit. Feedback provided to teachers is grounded in Danielson’s Framework for Teaching and is aligned to teacher professional goals. Teachers shared that they develop goals at the beginning of the year and then use feedback from administrators to inform their ongoing teaching practices. Coaching logs highlight teacher-peer supports that are provided to teachers, including parallel teaching techniques, tips on creating activities that assist the learning needs of English Language Learners (ELLs), conferencing-notes templates, and sample writing rubrics. These structures have contributed to an increased number of teachers demonstrating improved classroom practices.

- School leaders created a self-reflection tool entitled Teacher Development Continuum @ UASCJ that is distributed to school faculty and guides discussions on effective teacher pedagogy. At the beginning of the year, teachers use a common rubric embedded in the tool to self-reflect and categorize themselves as either a practicing, developing, accomplishing, or mentoring pedagogue. Upon completion of the tool, teachers work collaboratively with school leaders to establish a professional goal for the semester. Once a goal has been established, teachers are provided with opportunities to participate in schoolwide and individualized professional development (PD) trainings to strengthen their pedagogical practices over the course of the school year. School leaders chart teacher actions being made towards meeting their respective goal(s), which include measurable outcomes. Evidence of success is measured using student work products reviewed at the end of each semester. Administrators also meet with teachers to regularly revisit their goals and if appropriate create a new goal for the ensuing semester. This progress-monitoring system has helped improve teacher practices and increase student performance.

- Teacher observation reports show that staff members are provided with feedback in the form of commendations and recommendations that include specific suggestions teachers can take to improve instruction. For example, a school leader praised a science teacher’s growth in using assessment in instruction. The administrator also indicated that the teacher should increase students’ self-assessment. A recommendation to the teacher included, “To elevate your practice of assessing students in the moment as you circulate, consider using something similar to the checklist you and your co-teacher were using to give to students so they can monitor their own learning. Having students understand their strengths and areas for growth will help determine skills they need to help close gaps in understanding.” In a follow-up report, feedback included praise for the implementation of the recommended strategy and a recommendation for a new pedagogical practice.
Findings

School leaders use common assessments to adjust curricular and instruction for a variety of learners. Across classrooms, rubrics are used to provide actionable feedback to students.

Impact

Although teachers use data to adjust instruction for selected groups of students, this action does not result in demonstrated increased mastery by all students. Additionally, students are provided meaningful feedback to encourage improved learning outcomes. However, this practice is not evident across the vast majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Across literacy-based classrooms, student work is evaluated using common rubrics. There is evidence of a variety of feedback provided to students from both teachers and peers that is accurate, specific, timely, and advances learning. For example, multiple samples of student work products had a content-specific rubric attached as well as a self-reflection form that required students to set a goal for their next assignment and list three specific items on which they need to work. These work samples also included a score-tracking component that students were required to use to monitor their performance over the course of a semester. However, there is limited evidence of these practices taking place in math and science classrooms. Upon review of student work samples from these content areas, the feedback being provided were in numeric form and offered limited next steps. Furthermore, students were unable to articulate how the feedback they were provided in these subject areas improved their performance.

- Teachers are using assessment data to monitor student performance and plan and implement differentiated activities across classrooms. There is also evidence of teachers revising lessons, re-teaching topics, and extending units when necessary. Additionally, teachers have carved out time in their schedules to help bridge student-learning gaps. One student indicated that when she was struggling with writing a paper, she received additional activities of support from her teacher during lunch. However, there is limited evidence of staff using data to identify high performing students and then providing them with extension activities that serve as opportunities for mastery of higher-level standards.

- Across grades and subjects, teachers use results from schoolwide common assessments to adjust instruction. School leaders have designated a staff member to be responsible for organizing the results from benchmark assessments and sharing them with school faculty. Teachers use them to produce class profiles with individual student benchmark results. This data set is discussed during weekly department meetings and teachers are provided the opportunity to revisit curricula and make necessary adjustments to instruction. For example, at the beginning of the year, all grade-six students are programmed to a weekly skills-development course and they are placed in specific groups based on their initial Test of Mathematical Abilities (TOMA) and Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) results. Over the course of the semester, middle school teacher teams analyze student formative assessment scores to identify learning gaps which are then used by teachers to reassign students based on data from their current skill set.
Findings

School leaders and faculty utilize curricular aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards that strategically integrate instructional shifts and emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all.

Impact

Individual and groups of students have access to the curricular and tasks that are designed to incorporate argumentative writing so that all learners must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms for all grades and content areas, units culminate in an argumentative writing task that asks students to make claims, acknowledge counterclaims, and provide solid textual evidence to support those claims. This practice is evident in all four major subject areas and across grades six-to-twelve. For example, a grade-eight science unit plan required students to complete an end-of-unit performance task responding to the prompt, “Should parents select the gender of their children?” In a grade-eleven history unit plan, students were required to conduct research on the Civil War and Reconstruction and write an essay responding to the question, “Did Reconstruction live up to its promises?” Across grade levels, math unit plans included an argumentative writing activity known as, State Your Case. Students are given a problem solved in two ways and they need to explain the math tools and approaches used in each. Students must also evaluate the two approaches, explain which is correct, and justify their decision. As a result, curricula provides students with multiple opportunities to think critically and make fact-based decisions on an ongoing basis.

- School leaders and faculty have incorporated interdisciplinary units that provide opportunities for students to conduct research and share their findings with the school community. For example, high school students conducted a research unit on Orthodox Judaism in Borough Park. Students expressed a desire to learn more about the residents in the surrounding neighborhood and they generated questions to guide their research. The unit was designed to clarify misconceptions that may lead to intolerance. The students partnered with the Brooklyn Public Library to conduct their investigations. Students also visited community businesses, museums, and State officials. Students were required to produce a research report that cited sources and included footnotes. Upon completion of the unit of study, the high school students presented their findings to grade-eight students, also engaged in learning about the Holocaust and World War II. These activities support cognitive engagement for all learners.

- Analysis of curricula show that lesson plans across all content areas and grade levels are designed to include supports that address the needs of ELLs, and students with disabilities. A sixth-grade English Language Arts (ELA) unit plan included leveled readings, graphic organizers, images, and tiered work products. In an Algebra II unit on exponential functions in the real world, students were required to analyze and evaluate savings situations using compound interest formulas and explain their thinking. Two versions of the task were created, one designed for students performing at grade level and the other incorporated scaffolds. In a grade-eight interdisciplinary unit on WWII and the Holocaust, teachers provided an alternative text to support ELLs and struggling readers. The amended curriculum required students to read either Unbroken or The Boy in the Striped Pajamas. Although students were given different texts, all students demonstrated the ability to respond to questions such as, “How were prisoners during WWII dehumanized and how were they able to resist? Why do some individuals choose to collaborate, and others resist?”, and “Is it justified to deviate from the norm if you believe the norm to be unjust?”
### Additional Finding

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

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

#### Impact

Schoolwide, teacher pedagogy that is developed from a coherent set of beliefs that students learn best is evidenced as teachers use authentic texts and provide opportunities for discussions. Additionally, lessons are designed to include multiple entry points that ensure accessibility of task by a variety of learners.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Student voice and the use of authentic text was present across most classrooms. In a ninth-grade literature class, students conducted group presentations on an excerpt from a text entitled, *The Feminine Mystique*. Students were discussing their reactions to each other critiques of the text by various authors. In a grade-twelve literature class, students were engaged in a discussion after reading the book, *Season of Migration to North*. Their conversation was centered on gender and oppression as it relates to the text. During the lesson, students took notes of their classmates’ contributions. All students were required to speak at least once. Accountable-talk stems were available to support students who struggled entering the discussion. Some of the questions posed during the work period included: “What does *Season of Migration* to the North contribute to our knowledge of women’s experience and history including literary history?”; “Why would a woman question a man’s prowess because of his monogamy?”; and “Is this acceptable behavior?”

- In a grade-nine Living Environment class, students were conducting a genetics lab experiment entitled Paper Pet Genetics. Students were paired homogeneously in predetermined groups. The teacher created four variations of the experiment to ensure accessibility to the wide range of learners in her class, including one version to address the needs specific to ELLs. Additionally, there were adjustments that included follow-up questions to gauge student thinking, and hints and sentence starters as scaffolded supports for students. In a grade-six Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) math class, the teacher created three versions of the math activity to accommodate the wide range of student learners. Students performing below grade level were provided with extra scaffolds and supporting documents to help them complete the activity. Students in this group also received a reference sheet that displayed the associated percentages for each fraction and its definitions. Students performing on grade level were provided with additional higher-level questions that required them to think about the activity.

- Across classrooms, student groupings are intentional for ELLs and students with disabilities and a variety of supports are incorporated into lessons. In a grade-seven ELA class, the teacher created a transcript for the video that was viewed during the lesson so that students could follow along. The teacher also provided students with two types of graphic organizers and sample sentence starters to support them during the lesson’s writing activity. Furthermore, there was an English as a New Language (ENL) teacher in the room providing push-in support. In a grade-six ICT math class, students were working on a task that required them to use percent bars to express one number as a percent of another number. The teachers created two versions of the activity and one version included hints and scaffolding. Teachers also identified the anticipated need of each student in the class and created adjustments that included calculators, laminated multiplication tables, and next-step reminders.
### Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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#### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to all staff members. School faculty establish a tone for learning that communicates a set of high expectations for all students.

#### Impact

A culture of mutual accountability stemming from clear expectations, targeted PD, and initiatives prepare students for the next level.

#### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders create handbooks and conduct workshops to ensure high expectations are clear to staff. There is an established set of values centered on Community, Organization, Rigor and Evidence known as C.O.R.E. Values that are communicated to all staff throughout the school building. School leaders state that these values allow the school to support students’ academic growth and provide a roadmap for ensuring college and career readiness for all. In addition to communicating these beliefs to staff, faculty are provided with a range of workshops to support them in meeting expectations. For example, the school hosted a workshop entitled, Writing Quality Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). During this session, teachers were provided with an IEP-writing checklist with insights on transition compliance and utilizing student data to create student-specific goals. The staff was also provided with a workshop that outlined staff expectations for culture and discipline procedures, expectations for de-escalation, implementation of the schoolwide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) program, and maintenance of parent-outreach logs. Workshop materials and school resources are maintained on an online platform to which all staff members are provided with access to ensure that expectations are known, shared and, reciprocated amongst staff.

- Upon entrance into the ninth-grade, students are presented with information that enables them to effectively understand their transcript, including their credit accumulation and Regents exam progress. This presentation includes a question and discussion session that answers questions such as, “How many credits do you need to be promoted to the tenth grade?”, “Do electives count?”, “What happens if you fail a course?”, and “What happens if you fail a Regents?” Students are also provided with insight on the graduation requirements for Regents and Advanced Regents diplomas. There is also a student-led initiative called Big Sister/Little Sister that helps pupils navigate the expectations of both middle school and high school. High school seniors and juniors volunteer their time to form bonds with eighth and ninth graders to help them through the middle school-to-high school transition. They share academic and social experiences and provide steps on how to manage these expectations.

- All students state that they have access to an online gradebook platform that they use to monitor their academic performance. Students indicate that they can track their class performance on an ongoing basis. They shared that they are expected to monitor their own grades. If they are in danger of failing, they will have a one-to-one conference with teachers and counselors. As the end of the semester approaches, students will also receive an individualized letter reiterating the expectations for credit accumulation and whether they are at risk of not earning a credit. The report provides students with insight on the exact grade needed in the third marking period to successfully earn a credit at the end of the semester.
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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</table>

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in a goal-driven inquiry structure based on professional collaborations. Teachers also consistently analyze assessment data and student work for groups of students.

Impact

Teacher teams are strengthening teachers' instructional practices and groups of students are demonstrating progress towards department-specific goals.

Supporting Evidence

- At the beginning of the school year, all teacher teams create department-specific goals that drive their focus throughout the school year. Their work is supported by an anchor text read by all team members to guide their thinking. For example, the ELA team’s focus has been sharing best practices on teaching students how to engage in research. The team began the year reading, *Research Writing Rewired: Lessons that ground Students’ Digital Learning*. Teachers used insights from the text to adjust their research units based on discussions from the text. The math department read articles focused on what effective problem solving looks like as well as the *dos* and *don'ts*. As a result of this shared reading, the team decided to align math vocabulary throughout the grades using the New York State Education Department (NYSED) glossary. They are also in the process of developing glossaries that will be shared with students to encourage the use and understanding of math terms. As a result of these practices, the majority of teacher engagement in teacher teams is centered on strengthening teacher instructional capacity to support student achievement.

- The ENL teacher team was observed reviewing student data. The purpose of the meeting was to conduct a mid-year data analysis of students' fall semester data to prepare for spring 2019. The team was facilitated by a teacher and used a data-sharing protocol. During the meeting, each ENL Teacher shared a specific data set that was analyzed prior to the meeting. Each teacher was given the opportunity to discuss his or her next steps for their data and how it would impact their teaching decisions and student goals for the following semester. Since the teachers had students in common, there were also opportunities for all teachers to provide additional suggestions to the presenting teacher. At the end of the meeting, teachers deliberated over next steps for teacher development. A teacher stated that these meetings aim to ensure the alignment of expectations across content areas and contribute to progress towards goals. This work supports the team’s goal.

- To improve student performance on the Regents Examination in ELA, the grade-eleven teacher team reviewed student performance on the most recent ELA Regents Exam and used this information to adjust instruction and curricular materials. The team created a pull-out group comprised of students who under-performed on the exam. These students received targeted instruction based on the learning gaps and skill deficiencies identified during the data analysis session. Teachers also reviewed these students' recent DRP scores and decided to incorporate more opportunities for independent reading. The team documented trends between the English Regents Exam and the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSELAT). Consequently, the target-group students’ overall scores increased. Based on this outcome, the teacher team decided to keep the strategies that worked and replicate the efforts and strategies for students exhibiting similar needs across the grade.