Quality Review Report

2018-2019

Urban Institute of Mathematics
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 08X371
650 Hollywood Avenue
Bronx
NY 10465

Principal: Joshua Partridge

Dates of Review:
March 13, 2019 - March 14, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Elsa Kortright-Torres
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 Institute of Mathematics serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. 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>
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<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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</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

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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>1.4 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>
</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

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<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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>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>
### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

### Impact

Teaching practices across the vast majority of classes reflect school beliefs that students learn best through hands-on learning and making connections between subjects. Student discussions and work products evidence the high levels of thinking and student ownership.

### Supporting Evidence

- In a grade-six Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) English Language Arts class, the general education teacher began the lesson with a question, “What is a theory?” A student made a connection to science and responded that is like a hypothesis. The teacher then asked, “What is the central idea of the passage?” and directed the students to have a discussion in their groups. A discussion ensued, with students calling on each other to add to the response. Students engaged in a chalk talk strategy writing their theory of the central idea of a passage they read on a quadrant of a chart paper divided into four sections. After everyone in the group had written their theory, the teacher signaled to rotate to the next chart paper and provide details about the theories of another group. The students could agree or disagree but had to explain why in their writing. Both teachers modeled the strategy by writing in response to students’ theories. For example, one teacher wrote “Why did the volcano and earthquake theories last all this time?” in response to the student’s “Atlantis sunk because of an earthquake or volcano.” About three to four rotations ensued. This class showed that students were actively engaged in writing about the central idea and providing details.

- In a grade-eight ICT math class, one teacher worked with a small group while the other circulated and gave feedback to students on writing and solving real-world problems using systems of equations. Students worked on laptops and used resources to engage in the lesson about a financial consultation task. Students had access to a video, an exemplar, a graphic organizer, and a video of the school leader reading the task, which required students to figure out how much to buy and sell to stay within budget for a fundraiser. In a grade-seven social studies class students were directed to turn and talk about inventions during the Market Revolution and how people benefitted from them. In a grade-eight science class students engaged in a laboratory experiment to find how different body systems are affected by exercise. Students were observed working in groups and measuring their heart rates after different intervals of time. Across the vast majority of classrooms, students are engaged in activities such as these that require them to demonstrate, explain, and make connections.

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, students are engaged in high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership. In a grade-six visual arts class, the teacher circulated as each student provided feedback on a partner’s work on digital perspective. Students used a rubric to reflect on their work by rating themselves and answering reflection questions. Students interviewed shared their next steps and what to do to improve their work. The students were also providing feedback to a partner using the same rubric and writing a glow and a grow. In a grade-eight ELA class students used computer tablets to take a virtual tour of Antarctica before starting to read the anchor text and discussing their findings about how people live in that part of the world. In a grade-six math class, students had a choice of selecting a task card problem or starting a chart for a chalk talk strategy.
Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments and a common grading policy aligned with the school’s curricula, including weekly conferencing and rubrics. School leaders and teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Teachers provide students with actionable feedback regarding student achievement. Assessment data, such as pre- and post-module assessments and iReady data, is beginning to inform curricula and instructional adjustments.

Supporting Evidence

- Students receive actionable feedback from teachers by using rubrics that are aligned to the curricula. For example, in ELA, teachers use Teachers College Reading Writing Program (TCRWP) rubrics. In a grade-seven narrative writing piece the teacher used a rubric and added a glow and grow. The teacher wrote a glow that the student used descriptive language to reach her audience and as a grow that the student needed to use transitional words and phrases to show passage of time and to alert readers to changes in setting, tone, and mood. In a grade-six math assignment, the teacher used a rubric to provide feedback on mathematical process, completion, accuracy, explanation, and presentation. The teacher wrote a glow that the student had done a great job at writing the expressions and evaluating and a grow to be more detailed and to write in sentences for the explanation. Across classrooms, bulletin boards and student portfolios show the use of rubrics and glows and grows to provide actionable feedback to students.

- A representative sample group of students interviewed shared that teachers provide consistent feedback on their work. For instance, a grade-seven student had to conduct research and write an argumentative essay about medical marijuana. The teacher provided feedback on the first draft that the student needed more research findings to support his claims and provided the link for a website where the student could find relevant information and resources. Another grade-seven student received feedback about a performance task about the rock cycle, using a rubric about how to represent the data. The student used the feedback and changed the format to represent the data collected. Students reported and all agreed that they receive feedback that is helpful because they understand and can apply it. Although some students were able to cite specific feedback received from teachers, not all students were able to provide specific examples of how feedback improved their achievement of skills across subjects.

- The faculty and school leaders use iReady, pre- and post-module assessments, essays, and New York State Assessments data to adjust curricula and instruction. For example, teachers analyzed the argumentative writing unit and formed groups according to student needs such as organization, argument, or claim, explaining, or supporting details. Teachers conducted a baseline assessment for argumentative writing and compared it to a culminating task. Although teachers used assessment data to adjust the ELA curriculum map to include Advance Literacy competencies, tracking student progress by subgroups and making instructional decisions based on results of assessments is inconsistent. While common assessments are used to track student progress, results have yet to show that subgroups of students demonstrate increase mastery.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**

Through cycles of reflection and analysis of data, school leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

**Impact**

Integration of the instructional shifts has ensured that students are acquiring conceptual understanding, fluency, and real-world applications across content areas. All students have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged through differentiated groupings and leveled materials.

**Supporting Evidence**

- A review of curricula shows alignment of the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. For ELA, the school uses the TCRWP. In a grade-six ELA unit plan, the desired learning results are listed as Common Core Learning Standards. The instructional shift strategically embedded in this unit is the balance of fiction and non-fiction text. Students are to also analyze, predict, and support their claims with textual evidence. For example, to determine theme or central idea, the teacher plans on having students analyze articles and stories via a Modified Chalk protocol which requires students to read and write how the author presents the central idea, using evidence from the text. Similarly, in a grade-eight lesson plan students are tasked with organizing their ideas using the Restate the question, Answer the question, Cite text evidence, Explain the evidence and Recap your response and Sum up (RACERS) strategy. As demonstrated in these two examples, there is coherence of across grades of strategies that require students to cite textual evidence.

- In mathematics, the school adopted the National Training Network (NTN) curriculum which emphasizes the Key Elements of Mathematical Success (KEMS) and Key Elements of Algebra Success (KEAS). Lessons and unit plans show Common Core standards for different modules and mathematical practice standards. For example, a grade-eight unit plan asks students to solve real-world system of equation word problems by making sense of problems, persevering, showing quantitative and abstract reasoning, constructing viable arguments and critiquing the reasoning of others and other practices that promote metacognitive skills. In a grade seven social studies lesson plan, students are charged with analyzing an invention from the Market Revolution and presenting it mimicking a television show where inventors try to get investors to invest in their companies. Students must rank three out of six major inventions and then read about their assigned invention while annotating and answering the essential question. Students are engaged in curricula that integrate real-world applications and develop college and career readiness skills such as persevering, writing with textual evidence, and verbal presentations.

- In a grade-eight science unit plan, students are charged with learning how multiple body systems work together to maintain homeostasis. Students are to conduct a laboratory experiment to test heart, respiratory, and perspiration rates on two different days. The teacher grouped the students homogeneously according to data from a recent midterm and plans to have modified resources for specific students such as note pages and conferencing to clarify misconceptions. In a grade-six visual arts unit plan, students learn about space, form, and texture to create life-like art. Students work with computer software, complete a self-reflection, and peer review by writing a glow and a grow. The teacher will model for specific students and provide a graphic organizer for the peer review and self-reflection. All students, including the lowest- and highest-achieving, English Language Learners (ELLs), and students with disabilities are provided with models, modified graphic organizers, notes, and technology for translation if necessary.
### Additional Finding

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

School leaders consistently convey high expectations to staff through meetings and the staff handbook professional learning aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Teachers and school leaders establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all students.

#### Impact

Ongoing communication and support by school leaders around classroom visits support teachers' understanding and awareness of high expectations around teaching and learning. Teachers work toward ensuring students are given a clear picture of their progress by using an online platform, encouraged to take higher level courses and are programmed into electives to prepare them for high school and beyond.

#### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for professionalism, instruction, communication, and elements of Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Teachers receive a Staff Handbook which highlights expectations around best practices such as the *Framework for Great Schools* (FfGS). In the handbook, a link to FfGS is embedded and emphasized as an approach to strengthening priority areas of work such as developing a shared understanding of the framework, assessing needs, establishing goals, and engaging in cycles of learning. There are also expectations around lesson planning, classroom environment and technology in the handbook. During an interview with teachers, all stated that school leaders always reinforce high expectations. For example, one teacher shared that there is a sense of healthy competition among teachers and that school leaders encourage teachers to be advocates for their respective programs. Teachers added that they are comfortable in speaking up when they need something and that school leaders are supportive and make themselves available as needed.

- School leaders stated that through the Peer Collaborative Teachers (PCT), teachers are held accountable for meetings with a teacher leader that are expected to provide opportunities for professional learning and to create a process for intervisitations. Teachers are focusing on the component of questioning and discussion of Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. In addition, school leaders and teachers reported that they are held to high expectations through the formal and informal observation process. Teachers are provided with feedback that relates to the school's priority areas and areas of growth based on *Advance* data. The instructional cabinet, comprised of teachers and school leaders, meets on a regular basis to discuss expectations around testing, grouping of students based on achievement data, professional learning, and reaching their goals for the year. Additionally, daily announcements remind teachers of the days' events and expectations about attendance, professional development (PD) and meetings.

- Students are made aware of high expectations by the school motto, “I’m going to college. It’s never too early to start planning for the rest of my life.” Students have many opportunities to be successful. For instance, the school promoted high expectations around grade point average, uniform policy, attendance, and behavior by having a school challenge. Students were divided by cohorts and competed in each of these areas. Students also select or are programmed into an elective class from a menu that includes strategic math, book club, debate, and mock trial, arts enrichment, mock trial team and more. Students stated that they know how they are doing in school by checking their grades using an online platform. Students also shared that most are interested in taking the specialized high school admissions test (SHSAT). In addition, students shared that their teachers expect them to take Living Environment, United States History, and Algebra to obtain high school credits. There are more students that are taking the practice SHSAT class than in previous years and 31 students are enrolled in Regents level courses.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

Prompt written feedback captures teachers’ strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching. An effective system uses teacher observation data to drive the design and facilitation of PD.

Impact

Classroom visits result in written feedback that make clear the expectations for teacher practice and the supports available to help teachers meet them. Additionally, teacher observation data determines the professional development focus for the entire faculty and is supported by follow-up commendations and feedback in observation reports.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers receive feedback from school leaders after classroom visits. Feedback includes highlighting strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching. An area of focus for the school, based on Danielson Framework for Teaching, is questioning and discussion techniques, which was selected because it was one of the Advance area where teachers have the lowest overall ratings. One teacher, in the previous observation posed a variety of questions that challenged students’ thinking. For this particular observation, the teacher received an effective rating. The teacher was provided with clear areas of strengths such as “the majority of scholars participated in discussion.” Also, the teacher received feedback about maximizing the use of KEMS by incorporating higher-level thinking word problems in the lesson to have more students participate and to embed all the Standards of Mathematical Practice to increase the level of math discourse. The school leader offered resources such as the particular practices not evident during the visit and key discussion starters. In the next observation, the rating for this component increased to highly effective as students had high levels of math discourse using content vocabulary and were self-directed.

- Feedback is prompt and supports teacher development. For example, another area of focus for the school is using assessments during instruction. A teacher was provided with feedback regarding the use of a clipboard in the previous observation and received an effective rating for this component. The teacher was provided with a link to a video on using data to group students. In the next observation, there was evidence of the strategies learned from the video and the teacher using current Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) levels to provide explicit instruction. The school leader wrote, “You used current data of your students and they conducted a peer review with fidelity and could speak to their areas of need such as lead, elaboration, organization, and vocabulary.” Students cited and referenced the TCRWP rubric. The teacher received a highly effective rating. Examples such as these show that school leaders provide actionable feedback and support teacher development by making resources available.

- An observation tracker is used to ensure teachers are observed regularly and are provided with meaningful professional development based on their needs. For example, through the PCT system, four model teachers, one per subject area, ensure that they meet with individual teachers to coach, model, and provide professional development. The PD plan for the year, shows that content area PD is delivered on a monthly basis by consultants in addition to the PCT ongoing support teachers receive. In the PD plan, there are weekly opportunities to engage in PD such as “Making Thinking Visible,” “Google Classroom,” and “Reading Strategies for Struggling Readers.” School leaders stated that they build capacity by having teachers who are strong in certain subjects provide PD or are nurtured to become leaders such as in the PCT or to turnkey PD. Also, probationary teachers receive support from a mentor for two years.
### Additional Finding

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote achievement of school goals and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

#### Impact

Teachers’ collaborations have strengthened their instructional capacity. Additionally, teacher voice has driven school goals and action plans as well as the implementation of adult learning opportunities.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams engage in inquiry work on a regular basis. Teacher team minutes show that as grade teams, teachers meet to discuss best practices and promote achievement of school goals. For example, the grade-six team meets consistently to align their practices with the Common Core. In meeting minutes, teachers noted the school goal of 60 percent of students achieving proficiency on the New York State ELA Assessment. Teachers used the Atlas protocol to look at student work. On a narrative writing task, teachers identified a group of students as needing explicit instruction. Teachers plan on providing students with specific graphic organizers, one-to-one conferences, and giving students time to stop and reflect on their writing. They also plan on peer reviews where students will use highlighters to provide feedback on their partner’s work. There are also discussions around how to use different reading strategies to implement across content areas based on an article, “The Middle School High Five: Strategies Can Triumph” to help students with comprehension, vocabulary, note taking, analyzing text in cooperative groups and responding to the text in writing. According to school leaders, the work of the teacher teams has influenced and supported the work of new teachers and resulted in improved teacher practice.

- A review of teacher team agendas show that the math team has met to implement the NTN curriculum with fidelity to ensure that there is coherence across grades and pre- and post-modules assessment data to inform their instruction. For example, teachers have adjusted the curriculum map to ensure that it reflects their work around the book, Five Practices for Orchestrating Productive Math Discussions in a Classroom. In addition, the math team conducted an item analysis of Module Six of the NTN and realized that they needed to monitor progress with more frequency as a group of students struggled with multiple choice questions. Progress of students is being monitored by the instructional coach and classroom teacher using KEMS resources and exit tickets. An observation of an ELA team shows that teachers use the time to collaboratively plan lessons to ensure cohesiveness and strengthen their capacity as teachers. For instance, during the meeting, teachers discussed the importance of spending time unpacking the text and annotating questions as well as spending time on reinforcing power words such as “perspective” and “point of view.” Teachers stated and all agreed that their teacher teams have allowed them the opportunity to share and strengthen their practices, for example, using annotation strategies. School leaders added that particular teachers have benefitted from the work of teacher teams as there have been improvements in their Advance ratings.

- The PCT system, allows teachers to take on leadership roles in the school. Four teachers are focusing on areas such as blended learning, reading strategies for low level readers, adult learning, and creating a lab classroom. These teachers have a voice in key decisions on student learning. Teachers shared that decisions about embedded PD such as the implementation of a Department of Education initiative, Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI), has resulted in valuable learning opportunities and plans to improve literacy by having more culturally responsive texts for a diverse population so that students are more interested in reading.