

Quality Review Report

2017-2018

The Urban Assembly School For Green Careers

High school 03M402

**145 West 84 Street
Manhattan
NY 10024**

Principal: Madeleine Ciliotta Young

**Dates of Review:
January 9, 2018 - January 10, 2018**

Lead Reviewer: Michele Ashley

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

The Urban Assembly School For Green Careers serves students in grade 9 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm>.

School Quality Ratings

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area	Rating
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	Additional Finding	Well Developed
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	Area of Focus	Proficient
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	Additional Finding	Well Developed

School Quality Ratings continued

School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area	Rating
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults	Additional Finding	Proficient
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Finding	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area	Rating
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	Additional Finding	Well Developed
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	Additional Finding	Proficient
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	Area of Celebration	Well Developed
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Finding	Well Developed
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	Additional Finding	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

School leaders and teacher peers support the development of teachers with effective feedback from strategic use of frequent cycles of observations, intervisitations, residencies, lab sites, and the analysis of student work and data. Feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps.

Impact

Clear feedback and clear expectations highlighted in written reports and Learning Culture (LC) Strategies for Improvement elevate instructional practices, support teacher development, and align with independent and school level professional goals.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teacher peers provide feedback to teachers based on observation of instructional practices and the analysis of teacher and student work. School leaders and teachers frequently observe instruction and provide low inference notes, targeted next steps, and suggested professional development or resources to support teacher growth. Observation reports include low inference notes on teacher and student moves as they align with the domains of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Leaders and teachers identify next steps and areas for growth for teachers as they align to LC rubrics. In one report, the school leader wrote, “In order to engage students in challenging content that requires complex thinking, provide students scaffolding to explain their thinking, approach unison reading like a rule game. To do this, hold students accountable to the standards of reading by constantly referring to the rules and act as a referee.” In this report, the school leader linked the feedback to the LC unison reading rubric.
- Teachers are provided with or elect into lab sites, inter-visitations, coaching meetings, and residencies with school leader modeling. Each of these learning opportunities includes structured feedback, reflection, and follow-up. The professional development (PD) debrief tool is used after class visits and includes relevant low inference notes, learning intentions set by teachers, LC Indicators, Danielson *Framework for Teaching* domains, LC Strategies for Improvement, and teacher Commitments to Practice. One intervisitation debrief included a learning intention to “learn teacher moves for discussion and questioning, reflect on questions and get students to ask their own questions.” The vast majority of teachers identify feedback as key to their professional growth and reflection.
- A review of observation reports, residency debriefs and PD debriefs provide evidence that leaders and peers provide teachers with feedback that accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps. Feedback consistently aligns to teachers’ individual and school wide professional goals, as well as agreed upon LC Indicators. Residency Debrief Tools highlight the achievement of previous goals, areas for improvement, actions plans, and a target completion date for new goals. In one report, a teacher highlights improvement in her facilitation of unison reading and notes a need to norm the length of her mini-lesson to increase engagement. A lab site debrief highlights highly effective questioning and discussion techniques as an individual goal and identifies pacing and modeling of unison reading as LC Strategies for Improvement. The vast majority of observation reports and feedback documents align feedback to identified professional goals as they support the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* domains and LC Indicators.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

In most classrooms, teachers adhere to established learning cultures and consistently provide entry points for all students through questioning, discussion, and direct engagement with the Common Core Learning Standards. However, some teachers do not maintain learning cultures or provide high quality supports and extensions for students.

Impact

A lack of high quality supports and extensions in some classrooms limits engagement and hinders some students' opportunities to demonstrate higher order thinking skills and take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teaching practices adhere to established learning cultures for teaching and learning, which include formats for lessons, learning conferences and work time, unison reading, classroom social norms, and shares. Across most classrooms, teachers provide entry points for students that align to the lesson rubric's primary aim, which states that a lesson, "Provides efficient opportunity for all students to access information or instruction that is collectively beneficial." Teachers across classrooms engage students in small groups to read material in unison. Students use this method to support each other with language and decoding skills, read learning standards aloud, and discuss breaches, which include questions or gaps in comprehension while reading. Across classrooms, students read text aloud and note breaches verbally or in written form. In a math class, students read an article entitled, *The World's Most Beautiful Mathematical Equation* in unison and charted the challenging vocabulary words, including the words *constraints* and *aesthetically*. The teacher challenged students to use the help of peers and context clues to identify the meaning of unknown words, but also provided access to dictionaries. In most classes visited, small group unison reading led to students being engaged in challenging text and sharing their thinking via breaches. Students are expected to share and discuss breaches to increase their understanding. However, in some classrooms, not all students were engaged or shared their thinking using the breach method.
- Although most teachers visited adhered to the learning cultures and unison reading rubric, some classrooms did not, leading to unresolved breaches and limited engagement for some students. Although unison reading rubrics were present in most classes, in a few classrooms, the rubrics were not accessible and students did not follow the indicators, which included "Tabletop is clear of clutter. Texts, Unison Reading Rules and a pencil are the only materials needed (4a). Participate evenly, No one student dominates, and passive students are supported to contribute (1e)." In an English class, rubrics were not present and not all students engaged in unison reading. In a science class, students did not have materials to record their breaches. Some students had breaches that were not resolved and were unable to complete the assignment.
- In most classrooms visited, student selected texts for unison reading and discussions during breaches reflected high levels of thinking and participation. However, in some classrooms, a lack of structure for participation and the absence of unison reading guidelines hindered students' abilities to share their thinking and take ownership of their discussions. In one math class, students had high-level discussions of difficult vocabulary and terms and independently recorded their breaches on white boards in preparation for a share. In a science classroom, students discussed the rock cycle and created a visual model using content vocabulary and terms. In another math class, students were unclear what to share in small and large group discussions and in a science class students did not record their breaches during discussion and waited for other groups to present their conversions before recording their solutions.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula align to the Common Core and strategically integrate the instructional shifts and build knowledge in the disciplines through unison reading of complex text, text based answers, and writing from sources. Lesson and unit plans include accommodations for students based on student work and data.

Impact

The strategic integration of English Language Arts (ELA) shifts contributes toward coherence that promotes college and career readiness and plans for access for individual and groups of students, including English Language Learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, and the lowest and highest achievers.

Supporting Evidence

- Leaders and faculty ensure that lesson and unit plans incorporate the Common Core and content standards and strategically embed the associated skills into lesson goals and learning objectives. Curricula across contents include plans for students to read standards in unison and discuss any breaches in comprehension and essential questions that will guide their learning. A history lesson indicates that students will demonstrate understanding of the identified standard, read the standard in unison, resolve all breaches, explain the standard in their own words, select an historical event or development from the standard, and use the mastery rubric to create and answer research questions. The level of integration of the standards present in this document was evident across the vast majority of curricular documents reviewed.
- Faculty strategically embeds opportunities for students to engage with complex text daily through unison reading of primary and secondary sources. A reading lesson plan includes the learning objective, “Students will be able to identify the rhetorical devices of logos, pathos and ethos in Steve Jobs’ commencement address.” The lesson also reads, “This skill is aligned to reading analysis and the reading rubric outcomes of analyze and cite evidence. Plans across all content areas also include opportunities for students to develop text-based questions, write, and respond to questions with text-based answers. A geometry plan indicates that students will annotate two resources relevant to their target standard, analyze the texts, and explain solution strategies. Text titles listed in the plan include *Where Numbers Come From*, and *How to Avoid Being Murdered by a Serial Killer Using Math*. Student developed units follow a framework that requires them to cite primary sources using Modern Language Association citations, identify secondary sources, and develop and answer text based and essential questions.
- A review of curricular documents indicates that the vast majority of teachers follow the schoolwide lesson format that includes an accommodations section intended to answer the question, “What supports do students need to meet curriculum goals?” Across all lesson plans reviewed, teachers use this section to identify a variety of differentiation strategies for all students, including ELL’s and students with disabilities. Plans include the identification of specific students to participate in small group and individual learning conferences, as well as text selections by reading levels and interest, text translations and language pairings, planned shares and leadership roles for students, and various methods to demonstrate mastery. For example, a physics lesson lists “examples to demonstrate mastery”, which include plan an investigation, conduct an investigation, analyze experimental data, interpret information, and model or argue. This lesson plan also includes that mastery can be demonstrated via a lab plan, lab report, poster, PowerPoint, video, diagram or argumentative essay.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers use or create content specific rubrics that align to the grading policy and offer a clear portrait of student mastery using mastery rubrics. All classrooms use conferences, reading records and student self-assessment to check for understanding.

Impact

Student use of rubrics and meaningful teacher and student feedback enables them to better understand their work and enhance their performance. The actionable and meaningful feedback and effective adjustments to instruction make students aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers in every content area use mastery rubrics and provide students with written and verbal feedback in weekly conferences. All rubrics align to the schoolwide grading policy identifying achievement levels across four components that include not yet approaching, approaching, proficient, and exemplary. Rubrics measure achievement in standards based skills listed as skill outcomes. A health mastery rubric includes the following skill outcomes: interpret information, argue, present ideas, and evaluate sources. Reading rubric skill outcomes include: read purposefully, analyze, argue, cite evidence, and communicate. A review of student work reveals that in addition to assessing achievement levels for each outcome, teachers also provide meaningful written feedback to students. Students stated that teacher feedback, shared on rubrics and during conferences, provides the support that they need to make improvements to their work across content areas.
- Feedback on a history assignment highlights outcomes for improvement and provides next steps to enhance performance. The teacher wrote, "To improve on context, be more specific in citing your source and how it fits into the larger narrative of the time period. To improve on analyzing primary sources, can you describe another purpose for the source and relate it to the context? To improve on communication, be sure all sentences are clear and concise." A review of this student's work shows that she made meaning of the feedback and used it to enhance her performance in the outcomes of contextualize, analyze, and communicate, increasing from proficient to exemplary in each category. A review of work samples across contents indicates that students use the meaningful feedback provided in rubrics to enhance their work across content areas.
- All teachers use weekly conferences to check for student understanding. Teachers assign students to conferences each week and use formative assessment data from mastery rubrics, cooperative unison reading records, learning conference record notes, and student work samples to check student comprehension, make adjustments to teaching and learning, and identify new learning goals for students. Teachers use conferences to collaborate with students in designing clear take-aways and commitments for learning. Students sign off on learning conference records, signifying that they understand and are aware of their next learning steps. Classroom observation and student work samples illustrate that students use mastery rubrics to determine their own achievement levels and those of their peers during cooperative tasks and unison reading. Students shared that they frequently use rubrics to self-assess their performance on tasks before submission and again to assess tasks before resubmitting with revisions.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to all staff via *Principal News* (P News), professional development, and residencies. Teacher teams and staff establish learning cultures and systematically communicate high expectations using mastery rubrics.

Impact

Administration, faculty and staff hold each other accountable through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and feedback. Faculty provide effective guidance and advisement via advisory, conferences and student workout plans so that students, including high-need subgroups, own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The P News goes out to all faculty and staff each week. The news highlights expectations for instruction and opportunities for professional development and support. Leadership shares learnings from classroom observations, lab sites and walkthroughs and includes links to videotaped model lessons. A December 2017 P News welcomed all staff to attend three scheduled lab sites to be conducted during the week focusing on unison reading and reminded faculty that the lessons would be taped and placed on a common drive for access. This P News also shared a noticing from a recent walkthrough and notes that students in some classrooms are stuck in vocabulary discussions and are not discussing the author's intention during unison reading. The principal added that students were "missing out on some really meaty discussions" and reminded staff to "refer students to the rubric...stopping at vocabulary isn't good enough." The principal also added that she would model this in lab sites and invited faculty to use the LC rubric to assess her model lesson.
- Professional development is consistently provided to all staff and aligned to schoolwide goals. For example, during a weeklong summer professional learning, teachers attended sessions on unison reading and individual professional development plans called Teacher Workout Plans. Teachers also request PLCs based on individual needs and areas of interest. School and teacher leaders facilitate PLCs and conduct lab sites, inter-visitations, and residencies in which model lessons are conducted. Feedback is then provided using the LC rubrics. This year a group of teachers created a PLC to focus on the learning conference and answer the question, "How do I ensure I am conferencing around a conceptual breach?" The PLC was developed in consultation with the curriculum lead and teachers presented their learning to the entire staff with opportunity for discussion and feedback. Clear communication and opportunities to give and receive feedback allow school leaders and faculty to hold each other accountable to clearly articulated expectations for teaching and learning.
- Across all contents, teachers engage students with the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards through unison reading and mastery rubrics. Students meet for advisory four times a week and work with teachers and advisors to create student workout plans that identify short and long-term goals, identify talents and competencies, and review data and student behavior. Workout plans include transcripts, grades, assessments, and attendance. Students identify strategies that help them achieve their goals and behaviors that hinder success. Working closely with teachers and advisors, all students, including high needs groups, own their goals and are prepared for the next level of learning. A review of student data indicates that the percent of students applying to college has increased from 85.3 percent in 2015 -2016 to 99 percent in 2016 - 2017, with the 2017 – 2018 rate above 90 percent at the time of the review. In 2016 – 2017, 100 percent of the students who applied to college received at least one acceptance letter.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based collaboration on department teams that promote student engagement with standards school wide. A variety of leadership opportunities and structures are embedded in school practices.

Impact

Teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning and collaboration increases the instructional capacity of faculty and results in increased student achievement levels and graduation rates.

Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers collaborates on department teams and makes commitments that focus on the achievement of schoolwide instructional goals that include enhancements in teacher practice, student engagement, and mastery levels. Team agendas and department planning documents evidence that department teams use student data and planning documents to identify Common Core standards aligned to the curricula and collaboratively plan lessons to increase student engagement and comprehension of required standards. During the math inquiry meeting, commitments included helping students select appropriate tasks, providing mastery feedback, and sharing how resources help students master content. The agenda also included the creation of grassroots math lessons. Collaboration and the sharing of strategies have resulted in improvements to teacher capacity in the instructional domains of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.
- School leadership reports that teamwork has led to improvements in the instructional capacity of teachers that is evidenced in teacher performance data. Teachers report that best practices shared at the department level are also shared schoolwide and result in effective practices that are implemented schoolwide and support increased achievement levels for all students. A comparison of teacher performance data from 2016 - 2017 and 2017 – 2018 indicates an increase in the percent of teachers rated effective and highly effective in domains 3B (9 percent) and 3C (22 percent) of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. A comparison of student performance data also reveals that student achievement has increased from 2017 to 2018 with all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities increasing at least four points in the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) levels, which is higher than the national average growth for all students. The student four-year graduation rate has also increased from 60 percent in 2016 to 83 percent in 2017.
- Through their participation on teams and committees embedded in the school structure, teachers make key decisions regarding assessment, curriculum, and instruction. Teachers participate on a variety of teams and committees, including the School Leadership Team and Steering Committee. Analysis of the school's sustaining organizational chart reveals that the leadership structure includes content department leads, as well as leads of curriculum, assessment, data, professional development, and student behavior. The Steering Committee reviews all applications for teacher lead positions and all teachers and staff regularly review committee decisions and leadership team minutes. Through the team structure, teachers use teacher and student data to select and revise curricula, design professional development sessions, and plan student interventions and supports for students. Teachers across the school play an integral role in decisions that affect teaching and learning such as the schoolwide implementation of learning cultures and unison reading.