



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Robert F. Wagner Jr. Secondary School
for Arts & Technology**

Middle School / High School 560

**47-07 30 Place
Queens
NY 11101**

Principal: Bruce Noble

Dates of review: May 21 - 22, 2007

Reviewer: Clive Parsons

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Robert F. Wagner Jr. Secondary School for Arts and Technology has 500 students enrolled in grades 7 through 12. There is an influx of additional students at the start of grade 9 and some students transfer to other high schools at the end of grade 8. The result is that approximately two thirds of grade 9 students are new to the school. Forty five percent of students are Hispanic, 22% are Black, 20% are White and 13% are Asian and Pacific Islander. The school received Title 1 funding this academic year. Just under 4% of students are English language learners and 10% are special education students. Attendance in 2005 was 85%, which was below that for similar schools and schools across the City. This has improved, so that for the year to date it is approaching 87%.

This is an Empowerment school. Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Staff have responded very well to the increased opportunities to take leadership roles in key aspects of the school's work.
- Increased time for teacher collaboration is supporting the spreading of best practice and the more consistent interpretation of school expectations.
- Students appreciate the positive relationships that exist between students and between students and staff, as well as the academic and personal support that they receive.
- Parents welcome the openness of the school and the ready access that they and their children have to teachers and the administration.
- More focus on data and the implementation of clear rules and consequences, is resulting in increased student attendance, less tardiness and less cutting of classes.
- The school has good collaboration with other institutions to enable higher achieving students to gain early college credits.
- There are good examples of teachers integrating the arts and technology into their classes and consequently personalizing learning for students.
- Data is now being used to identify issues, target interventions and to support a more strategic deployment of resources to meet the school's plans and goals.
- The principal has the respect of the school community, especially with regard to the developments and improvements over this last year.
- There are some good examples of individualized learning plans being developed to support the progress of students.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure the consistent implementation of agreed school-wide expectations and spread most effective practice more widely, especially the drive to use formative assessment to further differentiate instruction.
- Define more quantifiable targets for overall student outcomes, together with signposts and timeframes for their longer term achievement.
- Bring together the increasing knowledge that the school has of the personal and academic growth of students to ensure that the performance of individual students is understood as well as it is for groups and cohorts.
- Seek an interim assessment tool that fully meets the school's requirements and provides ongoing analysis of individual as well as cohort strengths and weaknesses.
- Continue to disperse leadership systematically to increase further the ownership and responsibility of students and staff.
- Establish growth expectations for individuals and groups of students and work with students and parents at an earlier stage to establish personal goals and aspirations.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Much attention has been paid over the last year to establishing school-wide systems and structures, raising expectations of staff and students, and planning more strategically for future improvements. There is evidence of practice strengthening as a result, with more widespread use of data supporting more effective monitoring and evaluation. Leadership and responsibility are being dispersed more widely across the staff, strengthening their enthusiasm and commitment. This is increasing the capacity of the school to further raise outcomes for students. There are good examples of teachers integrating the arts and technology into their classes and consequently personalizing learning for students. Nevertheless, there remain inconsistencies in some areas of the school's work which limit the impact on students' growth. In addition, there remain some gaps in the school's use of data to raise aspirations further and to establish quantitative growth targets for the school and individual students.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

School-wide data is collected at regular intervals to provide the administration with an updated evaluation of the performance and progress of students across subjects, classes and cohorts. Teachers collect data on individual students routinely through assignments and quizzes so that they track performance and progress of individual students. Students know and understand teachers' grading policies and feel that they are consistently applied. The school has used summative assessments to understand students' performance and progress and to highlight areas for improvement. More formative and on-going assessments have been introduced this year to determine students' current knowledge and understanding. However, the school has experienced significant difficulties with the periodic assessment program that has been introduced so that its use in supporting student progress has been limited.

The school gathers much anecdotal information about students, including through discussion with parents, as well as attendance and behavioral data. Nevertheless, the school's systems and procedures are not yet fully aligned, so that the principal believes that student performance for groups of students, such as classes and grades, is better understood than that for individuals. The principal has identified a group of 9th grade students whose performance is causing some concern. A data review and classroom observations have been used to look in detail at their common characteristics and skill deficiencies. The performance of English language learners is monitored appropriately, as is that for special education students.

Comparisons are made within the data, so that the school is aware of any achievement gaps, such as between ethnic groups. While historical data shows little overall difference

in the performance of groups, the principal is concerned that variations in attendance between male and female senior students is linked with their progress towards graduation. The principal uses summative data to look at trends and compares the school's current performance with previous years and with that of other similar schools.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

There is collaborative discussion about the school's plans and goals. All parts of the school community are aware of and are working to achieve the school's main goals, such as increasing the graduation rate. Parents are involved in discussions to formulate and review the Comprehensive Education Plan through the school leadership team. However, plans do not consistently define quantifiable goals, such as for overall student outcomes, together with signposts and timescales for their longer term achievement. Teachers work with students to establish individual and class goals. Rubrics are used to monitor performance and students are sometimes involved in self-evaluation against them. More rarely are they used to enable students to evaluate their own performance, identify what was needed to have reached the next performance level and then take immediate steps to achieve it. Similarly, growth expectations based on past performance data for individual and groups of students are not universally set to ensure that the progress being seen is as high as it should actually be.

There are some good examples of learning plans developed to support the progress of individuals and students are being encouraged to track their own progress towards graduation. The group of 9th grade students identified through more extensive evaluation is receiving more focused support and intervention. The strategies used here are laying good foundations for more extensive work next year. Special education students have been integrated effectively into general education classes, while maintaining targeted support to ensure their continued progress. English language learners are appropriately supported by push-in sessions in subject classes.

Parents welcome the openness of the school and the ready access that they and their children have to teachers and administrators. The school places much emphasis on discussion with students and their parents to identify factors that may be affecting performance. Many teachers are quick to make contact with parents to raise issues or concerns, as well as to identify success, although best practice is not yet universal. Students appreciate those classrooms where high expectations are evident and reinforced consistently. Support and encouragement for college applications is provided, although the opportunity to work with students and their parents to establish personal goals and high aspirations at an early stage is missed.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

An appropriate range of courses are offered to students, with recovery, elective and advanced courses planned to meet the varying needs of students in higher grades. For example, good collaboration with other institutions enables higher achieving students to gain college credits. Courses that reflect the school’s focus on the arts and technology are also available, although some students would appreciate an even wider selection. There are good examples of teachers integrating the arts and technology into their classes. This is helping to personalize learning for students, as well as providing opportunities for differentiation. More generally, teachers use what they know about students’ personal and academic progress to plan instruction, so that their support and challenge is appropriately differentiated. Consequently, students mostly engage well in lessons, and at a suitable level of challenge. Teachers feel accountable for the quality of their instruction and the impact on student progress. Accountability is maintained through classroom observation as well as the evaluation of performance data.

This year has seen a more strategic deployment of resources, including significantly increased funding provided through recent Title 1 eligibility. Resources, including staffing, are being deployed to meet specific issues identified through data analysis, as well as to meet the school’s over-arching plans and goals. A new committee is working very effectively to ensure that the schedule for the new academic year is very well geared to meeting students’ needs.

Students appreciate the positive relationships that exist between students and between students and staff. They appreciate the academic and personal support that they receive and recognize that there is an adult within the school to whom they would turn should the need arise. More focused activity, based on the data available, is resulting in increases in student attendance. The establishment of consequences for unexplained absence, tardiness and cutting has produced a more expectant tone, with students responding positively in the main. However, not all teachers have yet managed to consistently adopt the rigor expected in their approach to ensuring good attendance and punctuality.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The principal is careful to appoint staff who demonstrate that they will support the school in working towards its mission and goals. The principal regularly observes lessons and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction. The administration and mentors provide on-going support for both new and experienced teachers. Professional development is targeted at specific issues identified through performance data, such as teachers from a range of content areas working with the New York City Writing Project to improve students’ writing. A range of internal and external opportunities have included focusing on data to support differentiation and to inform scheduling.

Teachers meet by grade, department and cohort to share ideas and resources. This increased time for teacher collaboration is supporting the identification and spreading of best practice, although inter-visitation between classrooms is not especially commonplace. Staff have responded very well to the increased opportunities to take leadership roles in key aspects of the school's work. This is helping to increase the ownership and responsibility of staff. The principal has the respect of the school community, particularly with regard to the developments over this last year. There is the capacity to continue the school's improvement. The school does run smoothly on a day to day basis, although there remain inconsistencies in the rigor with which some expectations are implemented.

The school works effectively with a range of external organizations to support students in their development. This includes working with Atlas Communities to support the creation of a common curriculum and skills seminar for grade 9 and Urban Schools Attuned to diagnose student strengths and weaknesses and so provide more appropriate instruction for them.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is undeveloped.

The principal has a good understanding of the strengths and weakness of the school. Data is now being used to identify issues and to target interventions, sometimes at an earlier stage to maximize the chances of success. The relatively recent introduction of some of these strategies means that they have yet to impact positively on student outcomes. The absence of interim goals for whole-school plans and growth expectations for students means that on-going evaluations of progress are not always objectively measurable. In addition, the school's chosen periodic assessment tool has proved less useful than anticipated. Similarly, although rubrics are used with students and their self evaluation is encouraged, this doesn't consistently lead to students setting their own immediate goals for improvement which they then achieve.

The lack of historic systems and structures means that successive phases of planning and goal setting have not built successively on a thorough and focused evaluation of previous plans. Nevertheless, changes have been made that are providing more effectively for students, including programming changes and smaller class sizes in credit recovery classes. Parents and staff are involved in discussions to evaluate and plan the Comprehensive Education Plan. The drive to disperse leadership has resulted in effective committees being established, which are run by faculty members. The systems and structures being implemented this year provide a good base for further developments and are strategically supporting the school's improvement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Robert F. Wagner Jr. Secondary School for Arts & Technology (MS/HS 560)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> each student, classroom, grade level, 		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.	X		
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		X	
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.		X	
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X	
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.		X	
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.		X	
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X	
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.	X		
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.	X		
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.	X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 5	X		