



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Susan E. Wagner High School

**High School 460
1200 Manor Road
New York
NY 10314**

Principal: Gary Giordano

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Reviewers: Mary Ayala and Carol Foresta

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Susan E. Wagner High School is a comprehensive high school, serving close to 3,350 students in grades 9 through 12. The demographic mirrors that of Staten Island with White students as the majority (56.5%) and a remaining balanced mix of Black, Hispanic, and Asian students. However, when compared to similar schools, the school has a significantly higher population of White students and a significantly smaller population of Black, Hispanic and newly arrived students. Special education students comprise 9% of the student body while English language learners comprise only 4%. Both proportions are below similar and City school averages. The attendance rate of 88% is much higher than similar and City schools. The school is not eligible for Title 1 funding.

A Council of Unity complements the student government and provides an opportunity for the voice of students to be heard.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a driving force and has brought about positive change in the school.
- The principal leads by example and models high expectations for staff and students alike.
- The principal encourages risk-taking and innovative practices.
- The school is organized in a way that encourages continuous communication among counselors, teachers, and assistant principals about the specific needs of each cohort of students.
- The administrative team and staff have created a community where students feel safe, valued and challenged to reach their full potential as future citizens and leaders.
- The administrative team gives good instructional leadership to staff, by modeling best practices, and securing on-going professional development that is improving classroom instruction.
- A cycle of researching and reviewing performance data begins before students enter the school and continues throughout their school career.
- The school has developed an internal database that is up-to-date and is used effectively to inform instructional decision-making.
- The school's priority for ensuring academic success for every student is reflected in a variety of placement options and interventions, and flexibility to move between programs.
- An array of extracurricular clubs, sports, and special activities secure the active involvement of students.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase parental involvement to secure support for improved student achievement.
- Raise the achievement and accelerate the progress of special education students, Black students, and students who are economically disadvantaged.
- Continue to explore creative ways to pursue disengaged students.

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The school has implemented successfully an academic program that meets the needs of nearly all students, and not just those who have already achieved a high level of academic excellence. The school is organized so that a variety of staff, including administrators, teachers, and counselors, are responsible for monitoring the progress of a given cohort of students. Staff begin meeting with potential attendees while the students are still in middle school. They look at individuals' standardized test data and personal interests, and then effectively match programs of study to entering freshmen.

The school has recognized the need to be able to use data to make decisions about student placement and to set objectively measurable goals for improvement. Consequently, it has developed its own internal database to analyze course passing and failing rates at the end of each marking period and adjust student learning contracts accordingly. When questions arise from discussions of passing and failing grades, additional data is generated, goals are re-adjusted, and professional development is secured. There is still work to do in tracking the performance of some groupings, to pinpoint reasons why they do less well than other students and plan programs that accelerate their progress.

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.

Although teachers use a variety of classroom assessments to gain a secure understanding of what each student knows and is able to do, the school relies primarily on results from State and City tests and course grades to monitor student progress over time. The school has developed its own internal database and is able to generate timely pass and fail information at the end of each of six marking periods. This information makes it possible to measure and compare performance by individual student, classroom, grade, and course subject. All members of the instructional staff are encouraged to review the data and then discuss issues or questions that arise from the analysis. Additional data is then produced in an attempt to deepen the discussion around and answer these questions.

The school compares how well special education students and English language learners perform through ongoing discussions throughout the school year. Although the school measures its progress against its own past performance, it does not always compare all students' achievement to those in similar schools. Its analysis and comparative data has raised staff awareness that special education students make slower progress than in other schools. As a result, it has put programs in place to raise their performance and ensure that more special education students graduate successfully. The school is still striving to ensure that the monitoring and comparisons of the performance of other groupings occur more frequently to build a more secure understanding of the progress of students in all ethnic groups and of those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

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.

Test results and information from the school's own assessments are charted from year to year, disaggregated by some groupings and used to shape measurable goals detailed in the annual Comprehensive Education Plan. Using the overall school goals, teachers refer to three key instructional interim goals or 'bottom lines' for every lesson which are active student engagement, the development of literacy skills, and ensuring differentiated learning. Planned action to meet the school's goals includes a continued emphasis on sharing effective teaching practices, looking at student work, developing various assessment tools, and integrating critical thinking and literacy in all content areas. These broad goals are actively monitored by the principal and assistant principals in their roles as instructional leaders.

The school uses middle school standardized test data to set goals and place incoming students in appropriate courses of study. Collaboration occurs among administrators, teachers, and counselors, so that when performance data indicates the need for a program change, this happens in a timely fashion. As a result, students may be scheduled for double periods of English language arts or mathematics to extend their skills or, conversely, they may be moved into more advanced levels of coursework.

The school has developed a number of programs for special education students, English language learners and those at risk of not reaching grade standards. After-school sessions give good opportunities for small group work and one-to-one tutoring. These are just starting to accelerate the progress of special education students, although not all achieve well and graduate successfully. Although the school includes all students in the process of setting goals and planning action, it has not yet explicitly identified ways in which to address the needs of Black students and students who are economically disadvantaged. Thus, these groups under-perform when compared to other students in the school.

High expectations are conveyed to both students and parents and caregivers in a variety of ways. Student work, benchmarked against rubrics, is posted on bulletin boards throughout the school. Students note that most staff, especially the principal, challenge them to think and grow. Parents receive achievement information primarily from six report cards but may request daily and interim progress reports from individual teachers at any time. When students are failing a course, parents receive information about opportunities for additional tutoring and supports. The school, and specifically the parent teacher association, continues to look for ways to more fully engage some parents who despite the school's best efforts do not get involved in the school's drive for improvement.

Improving student performance and progress is the generalized goal of the school and is embraced by staff, students, and most parents. The school continues to look for ways to provide updated and detailed information about reaching its goals to all stakeholders.

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 well developed.

A number of curriculum choices have been made based on needs identified by data. For example, in order to address the literacy needs of a significant number of under-performing freshmen, the school instituted the 'ramp up' program with double periods of English language arts and mathematics. In addition, a number of teachers are planning ways to strengthen literacy instruction in classes other than English. Teachers modify the curriculum when results show adjustments are required to maintain students' good progress.

The school attempts to initially secure student engagement and differentiate instruction by embedding the curriculum within a variety of interest areas. As students move out of the ninth grade, many enter specialized programs that include the Scholars' Academy, the Institute of Law and Politics, the Academy of Finance, or the Academy of Hospitality and Tourism. Beyond this initial sorting and within the classrooms of specific programs, differentiation is less evident and whole group instruction more prevalent. Developing teachers' skills in differentiating instruction is one of the three 'instructional bottom lines' for the school. Most students are interested in their studies, although there is a minority of students who are not well engaged in their learning.

The school is organized so that all students are known as individuals by members of staff. Teachers make themselves available for extra assistance to students during lunch periods, preparation periods, and after school. Students feel comfortable seeking out the help they need and know that there are a variety of supports available when they fall behind or when they need to discuss personal issues.

The principal uses data well to make decisions about staffing, budgeting, and scheduling. Struggling ninth graders receive focused support in English language arts and mathematics to develop their skills and better prepare them for upper level courses. Classrooms are well resourced and scheduling enables teachers to have common planning time.

Attendance is closely monitored. The school calls home as soon as a student misses a class. In addition, an attendance committee meets regularly, assembles a profile regarding any non-attending student, and then develops an action plan to address whatever circumstances are impeding daily attendance.

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 well developed.

The principal is recognized as an effective change agent in the school. He is credited with changing the way the school uses data to plan for improvement and for introducing policies and procedures that ensure the school is efficient and well run. When openings occur, new staff are selected by a committee consisting of the principal, the assistant principal responsible for organization and the assistant principal who is head of the department where the staff member will be employed. The committee looks for teachers with good subject knowledge and teaching skills and an ability to use data to inform their instruction.

Professional development is planned to improve the quality of teaching and learning and occurs in a variety of ways. Teachers may attend off-site workshops and conferences but more routinely take advantage of class inter-visitations and focused department meetings. Teams of administrators and teachers meet routinely to review the progress of individual

students, classes, and cohorts and adjust plans and goals accordingly. The principal and assistant principals visit classrooms on a daily basis and so know each teacher's strengths and areas for development well. Their feedback, both formal and informal, leads to improvements in classroom instruction and student outcomes.

The school has secured a variety of community partnerships that are used effectively to help the school reach its goals and benefit a wide range of students, including both high achieving and special education students. Support services contribute well to intervention programs to improve academic performance. Students in the Academy of Finance take credit-bearing courses through St. John's University while students in the work-study program intern at JC Penney, TJ Maxx, and the Staten Island Children's Museum.

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 well developed.

The principal sets high expectations for himself, staff and students and looks for ways to consistently increase the use of data as a planning and monitoring tool. For example, the newly introduced teachers' workshop, held at the beginning of each school year, includes a section on how to monitor student performance and how to use the information to evaluate the school's work and set future goals.

Once the goals of the Comprehensive Education Plan have been established, the school reviews student progress in a cycle that strongly supports continuous improvement. Classes are organized to ensure continuity of instruction and the frequent communication between teachers, parents, and students. Annualized classes (those that meet for a full year and not by term or semester) make it possible to assess student performance over six marking periods to measure progress and evaluate effectiveness of instruction and curricular programs. At the end of each marking period, a summary of course grades is prepared and reviewed, firstly by the principal, and then by the assistant principals who share the information with teachers in each department. If information from this data analysis indicates a need, revisions to programs occur.

The school carries out a full mid-year review of performance data to measure its progress towards reaching its goals. Assistant principals and teachers look at the progress of individual students, classes, and grades and then decide what adjustments to either course content or student placement need to occur. The full range of data is reviewed at periodic instructional team meetings, monthly department meetings and faculty meetings. This has established clear procedures for constantly reviewing the work of the school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Susan E. Wagner High School (HS 460)	∅	✓	+
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