



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Robert F Wagner Jr Secondary School for Arts
and Technology**

Middle School-High School 560

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

Principal: Bruce Noble

Dates of review: May 22 - 23, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Jan Warner

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Robert F. Wagner Jr. Secondary School for Arts and Technology is a middle school-high school with 522 students from grade 7 through grade 12. The school population comprises 12% Black, 58% Hispanic, 16% White, and 14% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 86.8%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 57% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Data is used to target interventions effectively and support the strategic deployment of resources to meet the school's plans and goals.
- The school successfully supports those in need, particularly special education students, to succeed.
- Teachers work well together to plan, share and evaluate good practice.
- The setting up of a range of committees is ensuring that the management of the school is being devolved.
- Parents, teachers and students have high expectations of themselves and of each other.
- Positive relationships throughout the school promote high levels of trust and respect.
- Well developed systems enable teachers and the guidance team to track the progress of students at all levels and share all relevant information.
- Professional development initiatives, firmly based on data are supporting students and teachers in meeting their improvement goals.
- Students are well supported and guided to move on successfully to the next level of their education.
- Effective partnerships with outside agencies have been established in order to support the academic and personal growth of the students.

What the school needs to improve

- Fully embed the vision for the school so that it becomes a single driving force for development and improvement.
- Ensure that whole school priority goals are measurable, time-limited and have incremental steps.
- Regularly evaluate the impact of innovative practices and maintain the momentum of effective strategies in order to facilitate change.
- Further refine the use of data to extend differentiation in all classes.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The school has paid detailed attention this year to further developing its advisory systems, particularly in grade 9, in order to increase levels of achievement across the school. As a result, practice has strengthened and there is better use of data to support more effective monitoring and evaluation. Advisory teachers use data in a more focused way to ensure that support is targeted successfully. Resources and teaching staff have been deployed more strategically to best meet students' learning needs. Teachers meet regularly to plan together and work collaboratively with guidance to ensure students receive the support they require, in particular at transition points in their school career. An increase in the number of teacher committees is enabling more members of staff to become part of the decision making processes in the school. All members of the school community have high expectations of each other. The good relationships built up between teachers and students ensure that there are high levels of mutual trust and respect across the school. There is well-targeted professional development for teachers and effective partnerships with outside agencies are ensuring that students benefit from new initiatives being introduced.

The principal is aware that the school community needs to fully subscribe to the mission statement being developed so that it becomes a driving force used to move the school on still further. He is also aware that new structures that have been set up lower down the school need to be fully embedded and become part of the change processes as they are moved up through the school. Goals set are not, at the present time, incremental and time limited. As a consequence, targets are not reviewed regularly. More training on the use of data to plan differentiated lessons is required so that individual student's learning needs are more closely met.

The inquiry team is well established in the school. Its findings on the reasons behind the lack of progress of some grade 10 students are informing necessary changes to the advisory system for the upper school. The school is improving year on year as a result of the strength of the advisory system and improved communication. Since the last review the school has used data more consistently across the school, ensured students and advisory teachers are now involved in a target-setting process and teachers are more widely involved in the decision-making processes in the school. Student achievement has increased year on year with a very satisfying 5% growth in the 9th grade. The principal and his staff are now in a good position to fully embed best practices to ensure that this growth continues.

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

There is a wealth of data produced across the school. Internally generated data for each student is now in an easy to read format. It shows past performance and data needed for effective programming, as well as for attendance. Results of Acuity initially targeted assessments in the middle and high school, together with Regents year and pre-Regents year assessments are shared with department members. In this way, the school can track student progress and identify in a timely way those students needing support to graduate. Item analysis also provides specific information about strengths and weaknesses that teachers use to target support. They collect data routinely through assignments and quizzes so that they track performance and progress of individual students. Advisory teachers also collect student work in binders to use to set individual targets.

The performance of English language learners is monitored appropriately, as is that of special education students. However, diagnostic tools have only just been introduced to supplement the evaluation of the general academic results of special education students to give a more precise profile for each student that can be used to monitor individual education plans more effectively.

Comparisons are made within the data, so that the school is fully aware of any achievement gaps, such as between ethnic groups. Comparisons over time are also made. Girls generally do better than boys do, but leaders have not identified any significant trends. The principal uses summative data to look at trends. He compares the school's current performance with previous years and with that of similar schools, in order to evaluate progress made and set future targets. Teachers have received basic training on the use of Acuity but have not yet had enough time to practice their skills and gain a more in-depth knowledge of all that this data system has to offer.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The staff team works together in a very collaborative way to plan and set goals. Weekly grade meetings and monthly cross-curricular meetings are used to evaluate results across grades, classes and for individual students. Teachers use data to set goals, such as for Regents exam pass levels, and to arrange mid-year evaluations.

Every teacher tutors a group of students during weekly advisory sessions. Any student higher up the school who is deemed to be "at risk" of not graduating within four years is also mentored on an individual basis. The very good communication links built up at the weekly Friday meetings ensure that all teachers can carefully monitor the progress of the students they tutor. In this way, it is easy to monitor all individual student progress very closely. Students receive well-informed advice during weekly advisory sessions and are effectively directed to attend extra tutoring as necessary. In addition, the inquiry team has been working with grade 10 students who have not reached expected levels of progress

as predicted in grade 9. Special education students receive well-targeted support that enables them to integrate effectively into general education classes. This well-developed advisory system has been set up across the whole school but is most highly systemized in grade 9. Here, as in the lower school, a small number of teachers teach all subjects to all classes. In this way, teachers and students know each other very well. High expectations are conveyed at all times across this close network which is working together effectively to raise standards. The mentoring system in the upper school has the same effect. Parents are kept very well informed through direct links built up with their child's advisory teacher who calls a meeting with a parent when there are any concerns. Very good two-way communication links have been developed.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The testing regime associated with the chosen curriculum in the school is aligned to state standards. Although rubrics are used in most subjects, there is no uniform policy concerning how these are devised. Art and technology are beginning to form more of a significant element within the curriculum using cross-curricular links such as projects linking photography and technology. However, the students expressed disappointment that not all grades study art and music. They were appreciative of the extra-curricular opportunities open to them such as sports teams and clubs ranging from animation to psychology and literature. Teachers are held accountable for their students' learning through a system where the principal uses six weekly data progress reports to look for any noticeable patterns of poor results or lack of progress and interviews teachers accordingly. Data is used effectively to plan lessons and group students but the teaching is not always differentiated to meet individual students' needs. Continuing professional development is on-going in this area.

The school's budget committee works effectively with the principal to ensure that budgeting decisions are made strategically based on data. For example, the school employed extra teachers for global history and algebra to raise standards in these subjects by reducing class sizes. The well-developed advisory system and the close relationships built up in this small school where staff and students hold each other in high regard, ensures that high levels of mutual trust and respect are evident throughout the school. As one student said, "I feel safe because every teacher looks out for you." Attendance is continually monitored and levels are kept high in the lower school. This is not the situation further up the school.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to 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 regularly observes lessons and always provides constructive feedback. Professional development is tailored to individual needs with a menu of options allowing for personal choice. Teachers attested to the fact that they have found this system more relevant and of the most benefit to students. Students also benefit from well-researched projects set up in the school, such as working with the New York City Writing Project to

improve writing skills. As a result, English language arts results have improved. Teachers work in a very collaborative way and frequently work in pairs to visit each other's classrooms and share good practice. All teachers now have scheduled time to meet on Fridays. They therefore have time to discuss issues and plan together, across and within grades, making communication more comprehensive and therefore effective. New teachers are mentored effectively and given the support they need.

All advisory teachers and guidance services communicate regularly and effectively in order to ensure that students are kept on track. The programming committee also meets regularly to discuss individual student needs. As the guidance team is not involved in programming issues, they therefore have more time to counsel students and meet with parents as and when necessary. Students are offered very effective support in order to apply successfully to college. Clear disciplinary procedures are set out in a faculty handbook which is discussed with every student and shared with parents so that all concerned know what is expected of them. Any infringements are dealt with quickly and efficiently through the well-established referral system set up through the advisory team. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Students also benefit from the many partnerships the school has with outside agencies. Students have access to a wider range of programs of study through the strong links with La Guardia Community College. A variety of internships are available through associations with local businesses linking students to the world of work very successfully.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Data is now being used to identify issues and target interventions. However, some initiatives, such as extending the more structured advisory system set up in grade 9 across the whole school, have yet to impact positively on student outcomes at all levels. The absence of interim goals for whole-school plans and defined time frames means that on-going evaluations are not as meaningful as they could be.

However, teachers are now discussing student progress at grade, class and individual levels on a regular basis. Plans are revised accordingly. For example, more credit recovery classes are now available for the students requiring support and more high-level courses have been introduced for students needing to be challenged. In math, students are now set goals for the week and weekly tests are used to set students targets. Staff members use results and final outcomes to clearly inform improvement planning.

The new cabinet meets regularly to review progress towards goals set and there is now a more systemized approach to staff involvement in the decision-making processes which has ensured that the school has moved on over the past year. A new mission statement is being devised in order to ensure that a common vision for the school helps to drive it forward in a cohesive way.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME:	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Robert F Wagner Jr Secondary School for Arts and Technology					
Quality Score			X		
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.					
To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?			X		
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?			X		
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X		
Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.					
To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	
Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?			X		
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?			X		
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X		

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped