

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2009-2010**

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

**Middle-High School 560**

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

**Principal: Bruce Noble**

**Dates of review: October 27- 28, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: Geri Taylor-Brown**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Robert F. Wager Jr. Secondary School for Arts and Technology is a middle school/high-school with 553 students from grade 7 through grade 12. The school population comprises 9% Black, 60% Hispanic, 12% White, 18% Asian and 1% American Indian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 42% of the students enrolled and girls account for 58%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 91.7%.

### Overall Evaluation

#### This school is proficient.

Students at Robert F. Wager Jr. Secondary School for Arts and Technology feel safe and nurtured in an environment they say feels “like family”, and where there are “no bullies”. This feeling of well-being starts in the classrooms where course work includes required academic classes, interdisciplinary courses, and learning opportunities that support students who are struggling.

Faculty members meet regularly and share both academic and behavioral information about students. This good practice provides teachers with the “how to” on instructional strategies their peers have used successfully to impact student learning. These teacher-led team meetings also serve as the place where teachers carefully examine student data, discuss what they see as emerging trends and decide upon cooperative plans of action to improve student achievement. Inclusion of support staff, such as the guidance counselor, provides the added depth of ensuring the personal and social needs of each student is also met effectively. The school has accurately chosen teacher professional growth as one of the three goals for this year. At present, teacher development plans are not all inclusive. Clear connections between the multiple aspects of professional development such as class observations, team meetings and workshop training do not yet exist. The school does not yet provide consistently differentiated instruction, so that student learning needs are addressed across all subjects. There is insufficient use of instructional technology in all classes to augment student preparation for college.

The common goal of improved student outcomes is a central focus of all stakeholders. While some structures are in place, such as the teacher teams, the school has not yet firmly established a central structure that oversees long-term monitoring and revisions of all school decisions. Additionally, the school lacks a systematic plan to increase parental involvement.

The school’s location on a community college campus, along with two other public schools, provides myriad opportunities to promote student academic and social development. The school resourcefully uses the Public School Athletic League (PSAL) joint schools sports teams to encourage inter-school socialization. Additionally, academically advanced Wagner students have their learning needs met through enrollment in college classes. All Wagner students attend their own in-school student advisory class or seminar class. One student exclaimed that these varied opportunities and offerings make Wagner a “unique place that prepares you for life.”

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school offers a range of classes that include interdisciplinary classes to meet the varied learning needs of students.
  - The school offers Credit Recovery classes during the day for students who need to make up credits to graduate. This is complemented by the school's partnership with the community college to offer accelerated student classes through the College NOW Program. As a result, student credit accumulation has shown a slight increase.
  - The teachers have developed interdisciplinary lessons. Junior year English classes are aligned with the US History curriculum. The art teacher infuses Asian culture and history into her classes. These interdisciplinary linkages have deepened students' subject content understanding and knowledge.
  
- The school gathers a range of data identifying trends to get a clear understanding of all students' needs, including the performance and progress of student subgroups.
  - Careful examination of grade 9 and 10 data in 2006-2007 showed an increasing percentage of class failure. Teachers developed a grade 9 seminar class comprised of lessons that help students organize their learning and their lives. By offering the grade 9 seminar, the school has increased school attendance and improved credit accumulation of entering students.
  - The faculty use the Progress Report, Acuity scores, report card grades, credit accumulation on student transcripts and Regents exam scores to provide appropriate student programming and class schedules that meet the learning needs of most students.
  
- The school provides opportunities for teachers to take leadership roles as they work collaboratively discussing student learning needs, sharing effective practices and arranging informal classroom visitations.
  - Teacher teams meet weekly, and share a common daily lunch period, where formal and informal discussions take place focused on how to ensure student success. Teachers stated the team meetings are a safe and supportive environment where they can get real help when they say, "This teaching strategy bombed today."
  - Teachers take ownership of student data stating: "I use the assessments not just as a way of assessing the kids, but as a way of assessing myself."

- Students feel safe in the nurturing environment that facilitates learning.
  - There is full student participation in student government (the United Student Organization). This school-wide organization promotes student focus on community and world issues such as world hunger and homelessness. Students spoke proudly of their upcoming holiday collection of coats and canned goods for the homeless.
  - Students call school “a home away from home.” Students are eager to attend school every day, a factor highly influenced by the fact that each child is well known by at least one adult in the building.
  
- Students have opportunities to grow academically, socially and emotionally through support services offered during and after school.
  - Academic intervention classes are offered for students during the school day. This creative programming has improved student attendance in support classes. Additionally, offering these classes during the day allows students to have the afternoon time to participate in school sports teams or school clubs.
  - Upperclassmen, who are allowed out of the building at lunchtime, develop a good understanding of responsibility. Some of these students also attend College NOW classes on the campus. These grade 11 and 12 students are proud of these opportunities, which develop their self-esteem or provide them with the chance to accumulate college credits.
  
- Students, parents and school staff all share the vision of continued student success as the central focus of the school which has a positive impact on student learning.
  - A common goal expressed by stakeholders is that all students are being prepared to attend college. Students stated that the class work ranged from easy to challenging, but all agreed that the ultimate goal is for everyone to obtain a college degree.
  - Students and teachers are empowered to develop and implement initiatives that help students succeed.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Deepen the understanding and usage of differentiation across all subjects so that instruction consistently provides engaging and appropriate learning opportunities with particular emphasis on the usage and/or integration of technology.
  - Teacher usage of differentiated instruction varies. Some are well versed in this practice while others are novices. As a result, lessons frequently lack challenge for some students, resulting in slower progress towards their potential. Knowledge and skills are not sufficiently deep for all students’ learning needs to be addressed across all subject areas.

- Despite the fact that the school is listed as a technology school, there are insufficient courses in this aspect of the curriculum. In addition, teachers do not maximize opportunities to use technology to support learning in other subjects.
- Implement a school-wide system for parental outreach that involves all school stakeholders and includes structures for tracking and measuring the impact of all parent outreach initiatives.
  - There is a low percentage of parental involvement as evidenced in the Learning Environment Survey and in the attendance rates at PTA meetings and other parent gatherings. The school has not yet developed a school-wide systematic approach to outreach to encourage more parent participation. Additionally, communications between parents and school personnel about individual student progress is not consistent or even. Protocols and processes vary amongst school staff.
- Develop secure structures and systems that support rigorous monitoring of student progress and develop interim benchmarks and goals to evaluate instructional and organizational decisions to ensure that optimal learning occurs consistently for all students.
  - The school has established annual school goals and examines progress towards these goals during the mid-year as is evidenced through organizational programming changes at the end of the semester. However, the school does not have a rigorous structure that supports careful and incremental examination of student data to support review of these goals. Nor is there a system to implement appropriate interim revisions that may be required to support student learning. While teacher teams work towards implementing short-term instructional revisions to meet student needs in some class lessons, the school-wide instructional plans lack detailed interim benchmarks. This absence of a whole-school timeline has thwarted the development of deeper understanding and analysis of student learning.
- Provide teachers with comprehensive professional development plans that impact and improve their teaching practices, showing clear linkages between lesson observations, teacher goal setting and training at on-site and off-site PD workshops.
  - The school offers teachers varied professional development activities including the team meeting structure, writing a professional development plan, and attendance at workshops as ways to hone and improve instructional skills. However, these interventions are loosely connected. The school has not provided teachers with a comprehensive professional development plan. As a result, not all teachers have the central focus that connects improving their skills to increased student achievement.
  - School leaders are not expedient or thorough in examining the impact of professional development interventions on student learning. For example, the school has just begun to examine the results of a three-year teachers' writing training project.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Robert F. Wagner Jr. Secondary School for Arts and Technology	Δ	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?		X		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			X	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
<b>Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?		X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?		X					
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X				
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?		X					
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X				
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?		X					
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?		X					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?		X					
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>