

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Robert F. Wagner
Middle School 167

220 EAST 76 STREET
MANHATTAN
NY 10021

Principal: JENNIFER REHN

Dates of review: October 25 - 26, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Eileen Waters

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Robert F. Wagner is a middle school with 1252 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 12% Black, 25% Hispanic, 29% Asian students and 34% White students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 95.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders analyze a range of data that identify broad student trends and make adjustments in instructional and organizational decisions to increase coherence in practices. (2.1)
 - Using various data sources, school leaders have identified a general set of needs with English language learners (ELL's), students struggling to express their process thinking, a lack of challenge in teachers' questioning techniques and behavior incidents. School leaders gather limited data to address the needs of ELL's and create classes allowing the English as a second language (ESL) and classroom teachers to collaborate to address the language acquisition needs of ELL's and former ELL's. The infusion of literacy into the content areas addresses students' lack of content vocabulary in constructed responses. Based on data from the Learning Environment Survey, one assistant principal is now assigned to handle communication with the school community, thus decreasing miscommunication concerns.
- The school's organizational choices are beginning to align with the instructional goals so that the staff is afforded time and resources to target identified needs and Citywide initiatives. (1.3)
 - The school programs the instructional coaches to teach one class and the lead science teacher to instruct two classes, to provide colleagues with model lessons and a learning lab site that demonstrates instructional strategies respectively, also allowing additional time to support colleagues. Through modeling, feedback, and lab-site opportunities, teachers are able to turnkey new instructional strategies into their own practice. Science instruction, supported by text sets that offer the same content at varying reading levels, enhances the infusion of literacy and is now modified so that students participate in hands on learning tasks. The purchasing of specific instructional magazines addresses a school goal by enhancing the interdisciplinary work, and supports guidance counselors to facilitate group sessions helping students address essential life skills.
 - The school's purposeful organization choices affords the ESL teacher push-in programming with a classroom teacher to support literacy instruction and collaborate on lesson planning that incorporates some instructional modifications for ELL's. Homeroom teachers are purposefully matched to students' needs relative to a teacher's strong communication or behavior management skills. As students advance each year, the assistant principal, guidance counselor, and Special Education Teacher Support Services teacher travel with the cohort to ensure seamless student support year-to year.
- The school supports the development of students' social-emotional needs to create an environment that is favorable to learning. (1.4)
 - Teachers and staff contribute to a learning environment that supports the academic and social emotional growth of students by encouraging students to speak directly with their teachers regarding any academic or behavioral concerns before they need to reach out to a parent. The administration contacts parents regarding students who are insufficiently challenged, resulting in instructional program changes that better match students' abilities. Guidance counselors

- support students' social emotional needs by meeting with at-risk groups of students to discuss decision-making and anger management strategies. Groups of incoming students are identified to participate in sessions, such as strengthening organizational skills, to support student growth. A parent shared how her child was taught strategies to better organize her workspace, thoughts, and belongings, so that her child is able to complete tasks on time and keep better track of her schoolwork.
- Teachers and school leaders utilize multiple tracking systems to capture various trends on student performance to make adjustments that support student learning. (2.3)
 - Different tracking structures are in place to support the school in targeting the various needs of students and the use of them have led to adjustments that address concerns. An assistant principal monitors the growth of students' reading levels overtime, which has resulted in an additional novel to the yearlong curriculum, and supports discussions with teachers around targeting literacy needs. The safety committee's monitoring of incidents has led to the reorganization of staff members during transitional times and the removal of specific activities identified as the causal point for many mishaps. Two teachers who are piloting a tracking system has enabled the capturing of assessment data from various sources and led to additional supports during lunch for students. The administration is in the process of adopting a monitoring system to capture teacher performance data in order to provide sufficient information around strengthening their decision-making around teacher effectiveness and professional supports.
 - The school regularly informs parents of student achievement through several mediums to increase parental involvement and open communication around student progress. (2.4)
 - Although the school is currently transitioning its communication system, parents find the sharing of information using an online system to be very effective to monitor their children's progress and areas of deficit. In addition, teachers reach out to parents regarding students' academic needs and collaboratively develop plans with parents to build students' confidence and strengthen their academic learning through additional supports. The school website and emails share upcoming events and programs and parents are invited to participate in lessons as well as voice their concerns around deficits in the curriculum, as they have done relative to the lack of grammar instruction. Parents also appreciate that students advocate for themselves, by encouraging them to speak directly with their teachers regarding any issues or concerns to reach a resolution.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the curriculum to embed rigorous tasks that address the identified academic needs of students and purposefully challenge students' thinking to advance learning. (1.1)
 - The staff is working collaboratively to revise the current curricula by developing assessments and tasks that cognitively engage students. The curricula challenges students to recall skills and concepts, however, it struggles to continuously provide students with higher order thinking tasks that strategically extend academic learning. Although students are expected to analyze literature or extend their view, the task completion lacks a continuum of scaffolded thinking that leads up to attaining higher levels of achievement.

- The curricula engage students in tasks but struggles to incorporate learning objectives that sufficiently address the academic deficits noted in the school-wide data to ensure that all students progress and meet their potential. Students in a science class worked in stations to complete previously taught tasks, as data from a post assessment revealed not all students had mastered the content. Although the tasks asked students to record data or list procedural steps for making a sandwich, opportunities for students to express or extend their thinking were omitted. In a math class, students were randomly paired up to solve equations in order to block their opponent during a board game. However, some students' equations were simple while others were overly challenging, thus leading to mismatched activities to students' abilities preventing high levels of cognitive engagement among participants.
- Enhance pedagogical practices with instructional strategies that strategically address all students' learning needs so that high levels of cognitive thinking are fostered through discussion and student work. (1.2)
 - The school's instructional belief that students learn best through student-centered hands-on learning is inconsistently reflected across classrooms. Across a variety of classrooms students work in stations to complete concepts not previously mastered, work with a group to create a power point on a historical event, compete against a partner to complete an integer's board game and have teachers modeling their thinking. However, in other classrooms there is teacher-centered instruction, where students copy notes, answer teacher-developed questions, listen to teacher read alouds, and complete worksheets. The level of discussion and questioning in classrooms varies with some students continuously answering low-level questions, while other teachers build off lower level questions to move student thinking towards thought provoking discussions. A purposeful modification of teaching practices to best meet and challenge students' identified needs is inconsistent across classrooms, leaving some students uncertain of what they are learning and why, resulting in missed opportunities to enhance student thinking.
- Extend teachers' data analysis practices to continuously gather data around subgroups and students' learning needs in order to increase student progress. (2.2)
 - Although teachers are engaged in creating and utilizing pre- and post-assessments for units of study, it is not evident how data is used beyond a surface level to dig into the trends and needs of students. While the school has identified common trends in student performance, such as a lack of process thinking in student writing, these trends have not yet been incorporated in the curricula or instructional tasks hindering student achievement.
 - The use of data gathered from formal and informal assessments across teams and teachers captures limited information around the needs of relevant subgroups of students. Considering that English language learners (ELL's) are a targeted sub-group identified in the school-wide goals, they are either not accurately identified by their teachers, or in some cases it is the only subgroup noted. An in-depth analysis of various data sources to identify the on-going progress of multiple subgroups has not yet evolved into an embedded practice across teachers thus precluding strategic modifications to instructional practices that would target achievement deficits.
- Strengthen the practice of providing effective feedback that targets teachers' instructional needs and design a structure to monitor pedagogical growth overtime in order to foster professional development. (4.1)

- Written feedback provided to teachers captures commendations and areas for improvement, on a range of topics, such as classroom management expectations, wait time, and planning and preparation. However, administrations' feedback, which is linked with student outcomes and offers instructional strategies to improve teacher pedagogy, is not shared with teachers in a consistent manner. School leaders review individual observational data captured in a table document, but struggle to monitor pedagogical growth overtime. As a result, the ability to capture the progression of pedagogical growth across the staff is limited.
- Expand the goal setting process so that the school community contributes in developing and achieving data driven rigorous goals and specific action plans in order to accelerate the academic achievement for all students. (3.1)
 - School leaders have created instructional goals that align with Citywide initiatives, address a school-wide trend around consistency in instructional practices, and focus on increasing by 5% the proficiency of its English language learners, approximately 5% of the entire student population. In the absence of rigorous goals that address the school's achievement gaps, and are shared with the community at large, the school grapples to advance all of its struggling student population to levels of proficiency and beyond. Consequently, there is a lack of cohesiveness towards attaining set targets.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Robert F. Wagner	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score		X		
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			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	
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.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?			X	
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.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			X	

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.

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
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, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	

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.

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
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, with particular attention to the CCLS?		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		

Quality Review Scoring Key

UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed
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