

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Wadleigh School for the Performing and Visual Arts

M415

**215 West 114 Street
Manhattan
NY 10026**

Principal: Tyee Chin

**Dates of review: March 5-6, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Ronald Feinstein**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Wadleigh School for the Performing and Visual Arts is a secondary school with 529 students from grade 6 through 12. The school population comprises 63% Black, 34% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 43% of the students enrolled and girls account for 57%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 81.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal makes strategic and effective decisions to support the school's instructional goals which serve to diminish the achievement gap. (1.3)
 - The principal has aligned resources well to support instructional goals. In his first full year he has initiated all departments to develop common pre-assessments, mid-term and final assessments to ensure alignment to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) through the new practice of weekly collaborative inquiry meetings. New teacher schedules were developed to permit all staff to participate in common planning and interdisciplinary, collaborative inquiry meetings when teachers work to establish instructional coherence and opportunities for developing curriculum that is more responsive to students' needs. High achieving middle school math and science students now take Regents classes with a select group of teachers who have demonstrated success. Lower performing middle school students are now programmed for academic intervention for math and English language arts during an elective class. To further diminish the achievement gap all ninth graders have access to Achieve 3000, a web-based program to improve writing and Math XL for similar improvement in mathematics achievement. The school's acclaimed Culinary Arts Program is well on its way to achieving 'Career and Technical Education Endorsement' status and business and college partnerships have been established. These effective team structures, scheduling innovations and strategic community relations building ensure school-wide improvements in teacher practice, the improvement in quality of academic tasks and contribute to the increased sense of accountability for all teachers.
- School leaders' observation of classroom practice elevate school-wide instruction through effective feedback for all teachers and targeted support for new teachers providing leverage for professional growth. (4.1)
 - The school developed an Observation Report (OR) that enables teachers and administrators to have a platform to provide feedback to all teachers on selected elements from the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Written feedback captures the progress or challenges that remain as staff implement the school's initiatives. The OR captures evidence of progress for each teacher from the following competencies: planning and preparation; designing coherent standards-based instruction; classroom environment, establishing a culture for learning and managing student behavior; instruction, using questioning/prompts and discussion, engaging students in learning and using assessment in instruction. The areas of concern include administrators' recommendations for future success. For example, a new teacher developing pedagogy in managing student behavior was advised that "...despite your efforts to manage some of the negativity in the room, some members of the class were becoming more disruptive...however, your response to the behavior was respectful regardless of the situation." The data harvested from the tool drives the

school's professional development plan and supports new teacher development.

- The school collaborates to establish an effective learning culture and communicates high expectations that are connected to the path to college and career to staff, students and their families. (3.4)
 - The principal makes good use of the collaboratively developed classroom observation tool to communicate the extent to which teachers; along with their students are providing evidence of observed strengths and weaknesses as defined through elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. This tool allows both administrators and teachers the opportunity to track progress in key elements of teaching pedagogy such as planning, questioning and discussion, using pivotal questions, using assessment and engaging students in learning among other elements. Additionally, continued support is provided in identified areas of concern. Classroom observations include a pre- and post-observation conference and a template for self-reflection on each teacher's work is provided at the end of each cycle. This has resulted in developing a community of learners who understand their mutual accountability for the school's high expectations.
 - Engrade, the school's website, Global Connect and E-chalk collectively communicate to students and families real-time progress report data without little gap or lag. This means the data displayed reflects current status of all student work, homework assignments, attendance as well as interim and summative performance results. The school uses all these systems to promote parent engagement and college and career readiness. College for Every Student (CFES) is supported by the active parent coordinator and the CFES program coordinator and targets high performing high school students with data from the PSAT. CFES also supports a college trip in the fall. The power of the program is evident from the large cohort of middle school students who come to the high school office to be matched to a mentor from the high school cohort. The path to college and career is additionally supported through the Mayor's Initiative with Success Mentor which is supervised by the three assistant principals, the six success mentors, the principal and CFES as represented by the guidance counselor and program coordinator. This team collaboratively provides families feedback on the collage application process including financial advocacy and a deeper understanding of progress to those high expectations.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure the consistent implementation of rigorous tasks and integrate the CCLS units of study that require higher order thinking skills, promote college and career readiness and cognitively engage all learners. (1.1)
 - The school is beginning to align curriculum to the CCLS and analyzing student performance tasks. While tasks are designed to address the key standards of informational writing and the need to increase students' skills to support their arguments and cite specific evidence, units of study inconsistently include tasks that require high levels of critical thinking and

evidence of the instructional shifts. As a result, students' writing products lack clear evidence of the identification and inclusion of text-based evidence that supports and justifies their presented arguments and thus promote college and career readiness across grades.

- The school's curriculum includes tasks that emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills. However, these are implemented inconsistently across grades, and subsequently hinder students' accountability to meeting learning expectations, including students with disabilities and English language learners. While some teachers do provide the scaffolded supports these students need, many classrooms do not, which limits exposure to the rigorous content that demands high levels of critical thinking and ensures that students have opportunities to synthesize, justify and provide rationales for their thinking. Furthermore, while lesson plans provide evidence of familiarity with Webb's Depth of Knowledge, student readiness and differentiation constitute the school's working definition of rigor which further hinders the school's ability to provide evidence of rigorous learning. In addition, pivotal questioning techniques are not universally applied and therefore do not yet yield the checks for understanding necessary to ensure cognitive engagement of all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities.
- Improve implementation of teaching strategies, including questioning and discussion, which foster consistent engagement with rigorous tasks and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate critical thinking skills. (1.2)
 - The school expends considerable efforts in encouraging several common teaching beliefs about how students learn best such as the need to develop more inquiry-based learning and encourage student conversations and group work as a non-negotiable for all lessons. The school's chosen research-based teaching framework supports this less teacher-centered and more hands-on approach specifically through the focus on engagement and questioning elements of the framework. While planning documents for instruction include tiered and scaffolded questioning to assure that all students are met at their level, including students with disabilities and English language learners and professional development opportunities are offered to build awareness of the importance of high levels of rigor in both planning and implementation of tasks, there is inconsistency in the implementation of agreed-upon strategies for extending higher order thinking in a number of classrooms. Principal and staff articulate the value of pivotal questions to propel lessons and encourage discussion, however, since classroom practices inconsistently provide the multiple entry points all learners need to be able to provide evidence of higher order thinking in their work there are diminished opportunities for all students to engage in challenging tasks and demonstrate higher order thinking.
- Develop consistent practices across classrooms to effectively utilize on-going checks for understanding and school-designed common assessments to better measure student progress across grades and subject areas. (2.2)
 - Interdisciplinary teacher teams have begun the work of developing standards-aligned common assessments which are submitted to the

principal for approval. Data from these assessments and in some cases, performance tasks, along with formative student work, teacher feedback and rubrics are used to track student progress and make adjustments to the curriculum at frequent weekly meetings. Additionally, students are beginning to perform self-assessments using these rubrics. However, since the practice of norming the teacher evaluation of student work is at an emerging stage, the quality of feedback varies across grades and content areas. While some rubrics are assignment specific, most feedback to students is about conventions. Teachers articulate the value of frequent checks for understanding; however this practice is not consistent in most classrooms which limit the immediacy and effectiveness of teacher-student intervention in areas of struggle. Likewise, limited feedback hinders students and teachers from taking effective action to improve student achievement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Wadleigh School for the Performing and Visual Arts							
	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score							
X							
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?		X					
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?		X					
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X				
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?		X					
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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					
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?		X					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed