



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Robert F. Wagner, Jr. School

Elementary-Intermediate School Q078

**48-09 Center Boulevard
Queens
NY, 11109**

Principal: Louis Pavone

**Date of review: March 2, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Rajeev Bector**

The School Context

The Robert F Wagner, Jr. School is an elementary-intermediate school with 476 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 7. The school population comprises 4% Black, 36% Hispanic, 40% White, 15% Asian students, and 5% other students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.8%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	Additional Findings	Proficient
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Focus	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework. Teaching practices strategically provide multiple entry points, supports, and extensions into the curricula for all learners.

Impact

The alignment of pedagogy to the curricula, strategic use of varied teaching strategies to challenge and support all learners, and a focus on helping students master challenging content results in elevated discussions, high quality student work products, and high levels of student participation and ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses the Renzulli Learning System, as well as the School Wide Enrichment model, to provide differentiated learning and a project-based curriculum, thereby allowing students choices for accessing content and demonstrating their understanding. Students are grouped into clusters based on the results of assessments, and work on their group projects across all subject areas. Students present their projects at the school's annual fair to an audience of parents, teachers, and other members of the community. This illustrates the school's core beliefs that students learn best in an integrated setting that places a high cognitive demand on all learners while providing the appropriate scaffolds and supports for struggling learners. Teacher pedagogy is informed by the instructional shifts and the Danielson Framework in the vast majority of classrooms, as evidenced by the questioning and assessment strategies used.
- The school's instructional focus is "evidence in argument," and the school's goal is to develop students' skills of citing evidence to support claims. Across the vast majority of classes, the instructional focus was evident in student discussions. For example, in one English Language Arts class, students participated in a Socratic seminar, and in another they engaged in a close reading of the text followed by small group discussion; in both classes, students cited textual evidence, and teachers made use of text-dependent questions to prompt students to make inferences.
- In five of seven classrooms visited, the use of teaching strategies such as scaffolding, modeling, building academic vocabulary, and student-to-student discussion strategically provided students multiple pathways and high quality supports and extensions into the curricula. In a science class, for instance, students were highly motivated to design a biosphere using teacher-provided materials, and were constantly challenged not just to explain, but to defend their choice of material to be used, and the sequence of steps required, to their teacher and their peers.
- In all classrooms, students were in pre-determined, needs-based groups, with clearly delineated supports for English language learners and special education students; teachers demonstrated a nuanced understanding of each student's strengths and areas of struggle based on student work products. Planning documents were well-structured with differentiated learning activities for sub-groups and for the lowest and highest performing students. Students were consistently challenged to explain their thinking, challenge one another's thinking, and to formulate higher order questions.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers strengthen their instructional capacity by engaging in inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Teacher teams consistently analyze student work and assessment data for students on whom they are focused.

Impact

By examining class and grade-level trends in student work and student performance data, teachers are able to pinpoint specific areas of challenge for groups of students and design interventions to better support these students.

Supporting Evidence

- After conducting an analysis of closing the achievement gap data for English language learners, teachers and administration determined that their English language learners' progress decreased by 11.3% and underperformed from the 2012-2013 school year. As a result of this analysis, the school made English language learners' progress their school's priority.
- School leaders and teachers examined the element of rigorous instruction in the Framework for Great Schools, and data from their previous Quality Review. They determined that there was a need to refine the use of strategies that provide scaffolds and multiple entry points for ELLs. This needs assessment informed the development of their annual goals in the CEP.
- After examining student work, one teacher team noted that the majority of their students were struggling with writing clear and cogent prose, and needed more support in developing an understanding of structure and conventions. Teachers then created graphic organizers, sentence stems, paragraph frames, outlines, and modeled effective writing for their students. Subsequent review of student work showed an improvement in these areas.
- Teachers meet regularly and collaborate on teams to improve student outcomes. A review of meeting minutes revealed that vertical and horizontal alignment was evident as teacher teams regularly met to discuss grade level expectations, identify the lowest and highest third students, and to plan interventions for groups of students based on student work and their reading levels. However, teacher teams could not clearly show how they consistently use protocols (e.g., Tuning, Noticings and Wonderings, Critical Friends, Consultancy) and other structures to strengthen their instructional capacity.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards, and integrate the instructional shifts. Student work products and achievement data are used to plan and refine curricula and academic tasks.

Impact

The alignment of curricula to standards and assessments has impacted pedagogy at the school. Teachers utilize informational texts, encourage the use of textual evidence, and promote higher order thinking skills for all students by using a variety of resources and supports. As a result, students have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- One of the school's goals in its Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) is to implement targeted instructional strategies for English language learners (ELLs) to accelerate their progress on the New York State Common Core assessments. The school accomplishes this via incorporation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies in lesson plans, professional development on UDL principles with a focus on multiple entry points, effective questioning, and periodic assessments. These practices are then used to refine the curriculum.
- Teachers work to provide options for comprehension and for expression and communication through strategies such as graphic organizers, turn and talks, debate, use of manipulatives, journal entries, PowerPoint presentations, and Depth of Knowledge questions. Explicit supports for English language learners and special education students, such as cueing students by providing a clear focus of the lesson in student-friendly terms, and the use of manipulatives and visual vocabulary cards containing pictures and words are incorporated into curricula within each unit of study.
- The school's Self-Evaluation Form indicates that teachers use a variety of resources to design the curricula, such as, Teachers College Reading and Writing Project resources; Reading A-Z; Thinkability; ReadyGen; ThinkCentral for GoMath; and iReady for English language arts and math. The school's CEP lists additional resources used to support students, such as Word Study-Fundations, Words Their Way, CMP3, FOSS science support and Harcourt Science Modules. Additionally, on the 2013-2014 NYC School Survey, a 100% of teachers report that the school "ensures English language learners receive the same curriculum as their non-English language learner peers with appropriate supports," and 96% of students report that the teaching staff "make me excited about learning."
- The school ensures that ELLs and special education students have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged by examining student work and data for these groups, refining curricula and academic tasks, and formulating next steps for instruction through whole-group, small-group, or individualized, one-to-one instruction. For example, school leaders state that after teachers examined the results of the Academic Intervention Services and Response to Intervention teams, they determined that students were having trouble writing topic sentences. In response, they adjusted the task by further scaffolding it for special education students and ELLs, and by creating differentiated packets in the lower grades.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders engage all staff in continuous, ongoing professional learning to meet high expectations. School leaders and staff communicate and partner with families to prepare students for college and career.

Impact

By consistently communicating elevated expectations to staff and families through clearly defined structures and systems, the school creates a culture of reciprocal accountability that is manifested in increased teacher collaboration and accountability. As a result, staff and families feel empowered to support students in meeting those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The school partners with outside organizations, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Seaport Museum, Department of Environmental Protection, NYS Parks and Recreation, Lincoln Center Education, Studio in a School, and St. John’s University. The school also partners with families to support student progress toward expectations by encouraging parents to participate in the School Wide Enrichment Model (SEM) Program as real-life professionals to work with students, and by communicating each student’s reading, writing and math goals and progress toward those goals. The SEM program allows students to learn about their chosen career, and students are provided with experiences and projects from members of the community in the field.
- The school’s CEP indicates that the school communicates with and supports parents in a variety of ways. The school holds workshops (CCLS Parent Workshop, ELL Parent Workshop, ELA Parent Workshops), conducts online trainings, communicates with parents via Tuesday phone calls and meetings, and distributes the Parent Roadmap Handbook that details strategies for accelerating reading and writing skills, as well as grade-level expectations. The school also sends student goals and interim progress reports to parents, and holds parent-teacher conferences four times a year. Parents indicate that they appreciate the Saturday school program to prepare students for the English language arts state exam. They also appreciate the parent workshops conducted by teachers, as teachers explain the expectations for state exams and strategies to use at home to support and continue their children’s learning. One parent stated, “The school work seems harder than the test. After taking the test, my children always say that the test was not that bad.”
- Teachers are provided with a teacher binder that includes expectations for the school year, chancellor regulations and updated information. The principal makes a presentation to teachers on school expectations, school goals, educational initiatives, and student data and programs. The 2013-2014 NYC school survey indicates that school leaders provide professional development on the Common Core instructional shifts, the Danielson Framework for Teaching, Measures of Student Learning, the school’s instructional focus, and Common Core-aligned curriculum. The school’s CEP indicates that it provides professional development to teachers with a focus on effective questioning, using student assessment data to monitor and revise curriculum, using rubrics with the language of the standards to provide feedback, using student data to plan and set goals, differentiated lesson planning, guided reading, and GO Math/CMP3/strategy lessons. This focus on continuous learning impacts classroom practice by allowing teachers to try new pedagogical approaches in the service of student learning.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Teachers use rubrics and assessments that are aligned with the curricula and clearly capture evidence of student learning. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Curricula-aligned assessments and rubrics enable teachers to make ongoing instructional adjustments and provide actionable feedback to students. As a result, most teachers and students are clear on students' next steps and students take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Students receive a variety of feedback from both teachers and peers; the feedback is accurate, specific, and timely, and advances learning. Across all classes, students were aware of their goals, and student work was assessed on a rubric—teacher-assessed, peer-assessed, or self-assessed. During the student meeting, students discussed their best work and demonstrated a keen understanding of their strengths, areas of struggle, and next steps for growth.
- Teachers' assessment practices are strengthened by the use of re-teaching, scaffolding, using flexible-grouping, using visual cues, and providing options for demonstrating understanding via differentiation of process and product. Students are invited to approach a learning task through multiple ways and modalities, such as by completing graphic organizers, writing expository essays, discussing the content with their peers, or by reflecting and generating higher-order questions. By providing a variety of options, teachers are able to develop a holistic understanding of each student, and encourage all learners to showcase their understanding through their strengths.
- Teachers visibly and continuously monitor student understanding and make the necessary adjustments. They use checklists for assessing different criteria for each student as they circulate among groups, with notations such as "RT" to indicate the traits that need to be re-taught to students and "A" to note the students that have achieved mastery.
- Assessments and rubrics are aligned with the curricula. An analysis of student work provides teachers actionable information for each student. They then sort students based on needed interventions and provide targeted support to students. Teachers' conference notes and assessment analysis paint a clear picture of students' conceptual understanding as well as provide more granular data regarding student achievement across grades and subjects, and this information informs next steps and action plans.