



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**Robert F. Wagner, Jr. Secondary School for Arts &
Technology**

Secondary School Q560

**47-07 30th Place
Long Island City
NY 11101**

Principal: Stephania Vu

**Date of review: March 18, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Hongying Shen**

The School Context

Robert F. Wagner, Jr. Secondary School for Arts & Technology is a secondary school with 606 students from grade 7 through grade 12. The school population comprises 5% Black, 59% Hispanic, 14% White, 21% Asian and 1% other students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 97.0%.

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	Focus	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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Proficient
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	Proficient
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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach focused on improving student learning and developing leadership capacity.

Impact

The professional collaboration promotes teachers' self-reflection and builds leadership capacity in teachers resulting in ownership of professional learning and positive impacts on student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are part of a department and grade team that meet every other Thursday to conduct the inquiry cycle on student work and data. Teachers use school adapted protocols to analyze student work and classroom practices. The collaboration of department and grade teams help focus on both student academic and social-emotional growth and post-secondary planning for all students. At a ninth grade team meeting observed, teachers of different content areas, including the grade integrated collaborative teaching (ICT) advisor followed Flash: A Protocol for Looking at Students Holistically to examine the data and writing sample of one student with disabilities. The team discussed strategies to support the student and the discussion extended to how to inform the advisory curriculum for all the ninth graders.
- Teachers assume leadership roles as department and grade chairs and meet weekly. Teacher leaders collaborate on selecting and leading professional development workshops by teacher interest and need. The facilitators of the workshops meet with the assistant principal for instruction ahead of time to discuss what components are needed to make an effective professional development session by using a professional development rubric. During the conversation with teachers, it was shared that there was "more (teacher) voice than ever."
- Teachers work with the school instructional leaders on the structure, content, or facilitative aspects of the school professional development planning and during the process become the leaders and facilitators of the professional learning at the school. There are two inquiry cycles of professional development and each cycle follows a six-week format with five professional development sessions and one "show what you know" full faculty debrief, where teachers have structured time to share the work done throughout the cycle. Each teacher-led session cycle also includes targeted learning objectives focused on relevant pedagogical development, including unit planning, formative assessment, close reading and complex text, effective co-teaching, and questioning techniques, which are implemented in the classroom practices.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

All curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and high-order skills are consistently emphasized across grades and subjects.

Impact

The school's professional development/inquiry cycle model facilitates the development and refinement of curricula and the school is in the process of strategically integrating the instructional coherence across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers develop and refine curricula for every subject area aligned with the Common Core during the professional development/inquiry cycles. All core subject units of studies, including English language arts (ELA), math, social studies, and science are designed and adjusted for double period instruction to allow for students and teachers to gain a deeper understanding of content and to have more time to practice the skills. There has been a shift from covering the breadth of concepts to focusing on the depth of the knowledge. Students are required not only to provide a correct answer, but also to explain the concept by following the “claim, break-it-up, back-it-up, and wrap-it-up (CBBW)” model to write a summary in all core subjects, except in math.
- Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and high-order skills. For example, the tenth grade English language arts unit assessment requires students to write an argument that answers the essential question using evidence from the memoir *Night*. The task incorporates the use of a process rubric as a guide for the task, an argumentative essay rubric for essay development and sources for citing evidence. However, not all tasks in all subjects strategically integrate multiple entry points for the lowest- and highest- achieving students.
- The school ensures that units are aligned to Common Core and integrates the instructional shifts in all subjects, including the literacy shift of balancing fiction and non-fiction texts in the English language arts curriculum, teaching academic vocabulary in all subjects, and citing evidence during class discussions as well as in all written assignments. The school has implemented a school-wide template for unit plans which includes the design of essential questions for depth of knowledge, learning targets for intended learning outcomes, standards, and assessments of learning. The template helps ensure the coherence in instructional planning by grade and by subject.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn, and student work products and discussions reflect high levels of thinking and participation.

Impact

Teaching practices informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching engage students in high levels of thinking in classroom discussion and in work products.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are engaged in Danielson Framework for Teaching professional learning, which is closely aligned to the school's core belief that students learn best when they are engaged in high levels of questioning and discussions in the classroom. Across classrooms, students are in groups, reading for meaning, sharing ideas in pairs, and having structured whole class discussions. In a seventh grade English language arts class, students were to read two poems to understand the effects of line breaks and stanza structure on meaning. The students were grouped in triads to process the learning. The teacher used questioning techniques to help students make meaning of the poems and increased the level of question difficulty at each round of three triad discussions to guide student thinking. Students practiced their ideas on each other in the small groups before the final whole class discussion when anyone could be called on, by each other, to present their understanding.
- Teachers practice using assessment in instruction as in Danielson domain 3d, in order to bolster student academic achievement. In a twelfth grade English class, the teacher guided the students to identify areas of concerns of a sample research paper using a scoring rubric. Students worked in triads to discuss the scoring rubric, assess the research paper and score it. During the whole class share, each group had to present their findings with specific evidence to back up the score they gave to the research paper. Students challenged each other's decisions or supported each other with additional evidence for a reasonable score. The teacher assessed the students' reasoning to gauge their understanding of how to write and revise their own research questions that would narrow their topics and deepen the scope of their research.
- Students conducted a Socratic seminar to discuss the three essential questions for their argumentative essay in a tenth grade English class. During the observation, the students in the inner circle of the Socratic seminar were driving the verbal discussion, and the students in the outer circle commented on the discussion as it was happening using Today'sMeet software, which revealed the typed comments on the SMARTboard in real time. Students were engaged in the critical text-based discussion and they cited evidence throughout the Socratic seminar. To help students own the learning, the teacher assigned the students a written reflection on whether they changed their perspective of the essential questions based on the Socratic seminar and how they would incorporate what they had learned from the discussion into their argument essay.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school administers common assessments to determine student progress, and teachers work with grade teams and department teams to reflect on instructional strategies and adjust their teaching.

Impact

Teachers learn from each other's assessment practices and initiate new strategies to monitor student progress and make adjustments to meet students' needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school assessment calendar consists of five major internal assessments across the school year in each of the core subjects. The assessments include the MOSL baseline assessment, performance series assessment, teacher-developed midterm assessment, MOSL end of year assessments, and final/Regents examinations. It was the first time this year that the school uniformly administered midterm assessment to gauge mid-year student achievement and to inform necessary instructional adjustments. After the interim assessments, each teacher conducts an analysis of the assessment data with their grade and department teams and highlights standards that are difficult for the whole class or particular groups of students. For example, data analysis revealed student weaknesses in citing evidence and all subject teachers started changing strategies as a result of inquiry work and focused on developing student skills in citing evidence in their oral and written work. Even in math classes, students are asked about the process to justify an answer.
- Students are guided to do self-assessment after an end-of-unit assessment. Students use test corrections to help them understand and reflect on how they could improve their score and what their next learning steps are. Teachers confer with students whenever necessary or suggest additional supports and tutoring. In one example of a student self-assessment and test correction exercise, the student corrected her own mistakes in an Algebra test, and then wrote down what got her confused previously and what she did to get the right answers.
- Many teachers have adopted a lesson plan template, which the school has piloted. In the lesson template, there are multiple areas where teachers can plan to check students' understanding of the lesson. In addition to the "teacher moves", "student moves" are incorporated into the template for teachers to plan scaffolds to engage students in learning as well as assessment criteria for ongoing checks for understanding. Four out of the seven lesson plans reviewed used the lesson template or a modified version of the template, and teachers planned student moves and designed questions and moments for checking student understanding. Based on teacher needs, the school professional development cycle includes specific sessions designed for teacher-driven formative assessment. Teachers develop understanding of the theory and skills in practice regarding formative and summative assessments and learn to adjust lessons to meet students' learning needs.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the staff and provide them with ongoing professional development. School leaders and staff support student progress with feedback and guidance.

Impact

Teachers are supported to meet the high expectations for teaching and students are supported and prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate the core instructional philosophy and high expectations for professional and instructional practices to the staff in the staff handbook and during summer professional development. These expectations are shared at the meet-and-greet with the parents, at school leadership team meetings and discussed in student advisories. The school leaders provide the teachers with training from external partners, including New Visions and Carnegie Foundation. Furthermore, the school leaders contact two peer schools and arrange for the teachers to observe effective teaching practices. Teachers shared that expectations around accountability are clear and that everyone's input is valued.
- Teachers reflect on practices and identify strengths and areas of need. Teachers participate in learning sessions such as unit planning, formative assessment, data driven instruction, effective co-teaching and other professional and instructional elements defined by Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders use the Advance system to provide timely and regular classroom observations and feedback focused on next steps. The one-on-one conference between the teachers and administrators provide teachers with additional support to improve instruction and pedagogy.
- There is a school-wide advisory program targeting students in all grades to ensure they receive grade specific advising based on their needs. Students in ninth grade have an additional core class that meets at the end of each day when they check in with their teachers to make sure they have their homework and are organized to go home with a list of things to do and focus on.
- Teachers and guidance counselors provide students with ongoing feedback to prepare them for their next level. Grade teams use a marking period interventions protocol to identify and help students who are struggling academically, as well as to identify common problems or patterns of behavior that need to be addressed by the team. The school communicates with parents via Pupil Path/Skedula website about student assignments, attendance, grades, and progress to graduation. Once a week, the parent coordinator also announces upcoming opportunities at the school, such as college and financial aid workshops. The school college counselor, guidance team, teachers, and advisors meet with parents and students throughout the year to ensure all students are on track to graduate. The college counselor discusses post-secondary plans with all seniors, and every student who leaves the school has a plan. The school also hosted its first career day, attended by community members and professionals, to share their occupations and life pathways with students.