



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Susan E. Wagner High School

High School R460

**1200 Manor Rd
Staten Island
NY 10314**

Principal: Gary Giordano

**Date of review: May 21, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Joseph Zaza**

The School Context

Susan E. Wagner High School is a high school with 3363 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 11% Black, 26% Hispanic, 47% White, and 13% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 89.4%.

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	Well Developed
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	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	Area of Focus	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	Celebration	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	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently emphasize a culture of learning that communicates high expectations for college and career to all constituents and provide support to meet those expectations. School leaders, faculty and staff provide detailed feedback and guidance supports for all learners.

Impact

The school's strong communication systems result in families having a clear sense of their role in supporting their children's progress toward meeting these high expectations. Students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents stated that the availability of their children's grades, attendance and assignment completion on Pupil Path are invaluable in supporting their efforts to keep their children on track. They shared that the school's website is updated frequently with pertinent information. The Naviance system helps them understand college and career expectations and is available for students in the library's College and Career Center.
- The advisory program prepares students for a successful high school career as well as for post-secondary life. Students complete a number of surveys that support their understanding of potential career compatibility and their communication styles. Students noted that they have learned how to react to different people; write college essays and professional emails; and search for jobs as a result of this support.
- The vast majority of seniors have taken at least one Advanced Placement (AP) class while attending Susan E. Wagner High School. In addition to the eleven AP courses offered, College courses are offered to students through a partnership with St. John's University, College of Staten Island, and Kingsborough Community College. Students may also take a fully certified CACC sequence that includes courses such as psychology, pre-calculus, anatomy and physiology, and forensics.
- The school is divided into "learning centers" that are led by a teacher coordinator, a guidance counselor, and an assistant principal- there are several venues for receiving information. Teachers find the Monday and Tuesday, "Kid Talk" sessions crucial. Individual students' parents, teachers, and guidance counselors discuss students' progress to date and reflect on appropriate next steps. Parents confirmed that teachers consistently offer advice and support in order to prepare students for the next level.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers create assessments and rubrics that are aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers consistently monitor student understanding through frequent checks on understanding and provide them with opportunities to peer and self-assess.

Impact

The use of ongoing checks for understanding enables teachers to make adjustments to instruction to meet the needs of learners. Across classrooms actionable feedback for improvement is available for students but as yet is not sufficiently embedded at all levels to meet all students' learning needs to support mastery in each subject area.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, many of the checks for understanding are in the form of discussion prompts by teachers with the expectation that students challenge, support and correct each other. For example, in an English language arts (ELA) class, after a student made a claim about John Steinbeck's essay, the teacher asked the class, "Do you think that's accurate? And if so, why do you think so?"
- When interviewed, all students were able to produce work that clearly acknowledged errors made in their work and what they would do differently on assignments to achieve higher grades. For example, a student referred to a rubric and articulated that although she had good ideas and good analysis in her essay, she did not provide enough evidence to support them. A peer review essay and a teacher-graded rubric to assist the student improve her work was provided as well.
- The levels of actionable feedback to students varied across some classrooms. Feedback on work displayed on bulletin boards used "glows" with few mentions of next steps, questions to push student thinking or extensions to provide further learning. Teachers shared that negative feedback might affect student self-esteem.
- A school wide mock Regents' exam was administered after school and use the results to inform their instruction and give actionable feedback to students regarding next steps. The assistant principal of mathematics, for example, stated that her teachers adjusted a unit plan in geometry based upon an error analysis of a mock examination.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across all grades and subjects curricula and academic tasks are aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Consistent emphasis of rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all students including English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities is clearly evident.

Impact

Curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills resulting in college and career readiness for all learners. Across all content areas, coursework aligns to college readiness expectations so that all learners, including students with disabilities, must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers have developed curricula across all content areas that promote coherence in grades 9 through 12. The school offers many courses in advanced placement and classes at the college level addressing the instructional shifts. An ELA unit plan asked students to examine the American Dream by reading seminal works of American fiction alongside scholarly articles that place the works in historical context. Students analyzed the essential question across time and place.
- A review of curriculum binders (which include maps, units of study, model lesson plans, and assessments) reveals that teachers expect students to complete rigorous, high-level tasks in all subject areas. Curriculum writing teams constantly revisit and fine-tune these tasks and plans during after-school meetings. For example, a performance task in an ecological unit in Living Environment asks students to design ways to use bacteria to fight pollution. Across units in mathematics, performance tasks ask students to solve real-world problems with multi-step extensions.
- Engage NY is utilized by the teachers in the Math department. Scaffolds are built in so that struggling learners and students with disabilities can access high-level work. In a statistics unit plan, students are grouped based upon cognitive level and academic data. Scaffolds such as graphic organizers that ask students to fill in boxes titled “think,” “plan,” “solve,” “check” are used to assist struggling learners.
- In general education classes and integrated co-teaching (ICTS), teachers tier tasks and assignments based upon student understanding, learning style, and interest level. Teachers provide rubrics to assist struggling students understand concepts and skills such as annotating and close reading. In an ELA lesson on the individual and society the teacher provided argumentative, informational, and narrative essay graphic organizers to struggling students, SWDs and ELLS. As a result, the percent of students earning ten or more credits in the lowest third in grade ten increased from 58% in 2013 to 67% in 2014 and the graduation rate from 81% to 84%.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs that students learn best when they are engaged in their learning. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of thinking, participation, and ownership.

Impact

The school's coherent teaching practices ensure that all learners are engaged in appropriately challenging and rigorous tasks that result in rich discussions and the production of meaningful student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers consistently provide students with opportunities to demonstrate critical thinking. Students were expected to analyze, and support their position when writing an argumentative essay. Students in a grade 11 English class presented their analysis of the American dream by using textual evidence from a few novels anchoring their comments by referencing an essay about the subject written by John Steinbeck.
- In a math class, students worked in groups to solve a multi-step problem. Peers reviewed the work product and presented an analysis of the student's solution to the class. The teacher allowed some reflection time for the class. After a minute a student came to the smart board and made a persuasive case that the score of zero for a section of the problem was incorrect by referring back to the rubric.
- Across the vast majority of classrooms, students worked in groups to collaboratively solve problems or complete assigned tasks. Students in a math class solved problems together, shared their thinking and extended their peers' thinking. In an ICTS Global history class students in a Socratic seminar debated the impact of globalization using text based evidence and academic vocabulary to support their answers. One student used the word "paradigm" and the teacher quickly checked on student understanding of the word using the thumbs up protocol. All the students understood the definition. When a student in the outer circle wanted to speak, he "tapped" himself into the inner circle.
- Across subjects and grades tasks and lessons provided many opportunities for student participation, sustained student-to-student dialogue and student-generated questions of high cognitive challenge. For example, in two foreign language classes, the teacher used effective questioning to drive high level peer to peer questioning and discussion as students worked in groups or with partners. In both classes students engaged in a "tea party" with the task of creating a story using content related vocabulary and correct grammatical structure.
- The average SAT score is above average at 1654.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher Teams	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Teacher teams systematically analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused. Distributed leadership structures across grades and content areas are present.

Impact

Ongoing teacher collaborations strengthen teacher instructional practice, promote school-wide coherence, and ensure continued progress toward goals for all learners. Effective teacher leadership plays an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Using Google Apps for Education, teams collaboratively refine curriculum maps and units of study, ensuring coherence of curricula and deep alignment to the Common Core Standards. Teacher teams adjust curriculum maps, calendar of lessons and lesson plans based upon data culled from student work and common assessments. In an ELA unit titled *The Individual and Society*, teachers added tiered vocabulary so all students could access the text heavy material and added “text to real world” examples to deepen student understanding of the concept of idealism.
- All teachers meet regularly in grade and content specific teams to analyze student work, identify student needs and inform goals for students. Teachers regularly engage in ongoing professional reflection and collaboration. Protocols to look at the outcomes of assessments, identify student needs and develop an action plan to address next steps are utilized. For example, a team of ninth grade teachers analyzed one student’s work products from a social studies class against an exemplar to uncover strengths and weaknesses in writing. During this meeting, each teacher shared an analysis of the students’ demonstration of critical thinking skills, and solicited low-inference, non-evaluative responses from their peers. Following this presentation, teachers strategized next steps to implement across content areas that might include additional instructional and guidance supports for this and similar students.
- Distributed leadership is embedded within the school’s culture. Teacher leaders facilitate weekly department and grade level meetings. Teachers assume an integral role in supporting colleagues and making instructional decisions that affect student programming and curricula development. For example, teachers develop courses based on identified areas of student need and interest, and present those courses to students in a published course catalog. The school offers electives including Introduction to Filmmaking, Graphic Design, and Sports Marketing.
- Teacher teams have leaders and the leaders meet as a team and attend additional professional development. They then turnkey newly gained information to both teacher teams and the administration. For example, the team leaders meet to conduct Advance component study. As a result, the team met with the administration and created a modified rubric based upon the Danielson Framework to assist teachers to promote increased student engagement, stronger assessments and critical thinking in students.