Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Robert F. Wagner, Jr. Secondary School for Arts and Technology

Secondary School 24Q560

47-07 30th Pl.
Queens
NY 11101

Principal: Daniel Albeta

Dates of Review:
November 15, 2016 - November 16, 2016

Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Quality Ratings continued

#### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Area of Celebration Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding Well Developed</td>
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</table>

#### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating: Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

With support from a schoolwide CORE program of advisement for students and collaborations with community partners, school leaders provide a range of learning supports for staff, students and families to collaborate effectively in addressing students’ academic and social-emotional needs.

Impact

Multiple support structures, aligned to the needs of staff, students, and families, contribute to a highly-personalized learning environment that promotes academic and social emotional learning by all students.

Supporting Evidence

- A schoolwide advisory system known as CORE allows students to have ready access to an adult who provides support for their academic and social-emotional needs. Sixth and ninth grade students meet with their advisor every day and students in all other grades meet with an advisor once per week. Students build supportive relationships with advisors who coordinate homework help and tutoring, and guide them in goal-setting for college and career readiness, positive character development, and making connections between academic habits and success in life. Guidance counselors, CORE advisors and school leaders work with students to create a path to success and keep each one aware of credit accumulation and attendance targets for satisfactory progress towards graduation. These activities contribute to average credit accumulation rates which now stand at of 90 percent for ninth grade students and 94 percent for tenth grade students, as per 2015-2016 school data reports. These advisement activities also contribute to a current average daily student attendance of 94 percent, which is well above the city and district average for similar schools.

- All staff members utilize the Skedula online portal to provide families with real-time information about and suggestions for addressing deficits in student grades, attendance and credit accumulation. Free email accounts linked to Google Apps for Education facilitate outreach to families and ongoing monitoring of student progress, with collaborative follow-up on next steps for student growth. A director of college counseling works with other counselors and advisory teachers to keep students and families informed about preparation and application steps for college admission. During the meeting with students, they stated that via a mandatory college information session and events at a recent college application week, students and families received assistance in researching college programs and completing online college applications. Additionally, through a special college office, students are afforded access to a myriad of experiences designed to build their readiness for success in college and careers.

- The school enhances students’ academic and social emotional learning through partnerships with organizations such as Liberty Partnership, which provides for Regents review work, and College Bound Initiative, which coordinates events that help students navigate college application, acceptance and matriculation requirements. Through these initiatives, students and families gain access to college fairs and tours and students participate in Scholastic Achievement Test preparation and other skill building activities. College Now courses at LaGuardia Community College and other City University of New York (CUNY) colleges immerse students in early college learning experiences, with positive impact on college acceptance rates, as evidenced by graduation tracking data for the 2015-2016 school year, which show 100 percent of senior students applying to college and 80 percent of them gaining acceptance to a college.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies, such as the use of Google Classroom apps for interactive teaching and learning, immerse students, including students with disabilities, in rigorous work and discussions. However, instructional strategies do not illustrate consistent use of extensions of tasks for students at diverse levels.

Impact

While academic tasks foster higher-order thinking across classrooms, there are missed opportunities to engage all students in task extensions that allow them to take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade twelve English Language Arts (ELA) class, the teacher engaged students in using art to interpret parts of the text, Of Mice and Men, and to analyze actions of characters in order to create their own stage play about “power dynamics between people.” Small groups of students, organized as theatre companies, combined their ideas and interpretations of quotes from the play to portray themes from the text. Students shared their thinking aloud, answered clarifying questions from peers and challenged peers’ points of view, based on evidence from the text. The high level of ownership of learning and engagement of students in peer-to-peer dialogue seen in this classroom, where students made connections between themes in the text and events in their own lives, was not evident in a few other classrooms visited. In a geometry class, most students spent the observed time using calculators to graph linear equations, with little interaction with the teacher and with the few peers who gave brief responses to teacher-led questions.

- In the classrooms visited, teachers provided visual supports and scaffolds for students to be highly engaged in learning. In a grade twelve United States Government class, the teacher guided students in using transition words, a self-assessment rubric, graphic organizers, and laptops, to revise drafts of their research paper about a topic of their choice. Using a Google Classroom portal, students revised their work products by adding words from the transitions word bank and used the rubric to generate additional details for their research paper. One student shared a paper about gun control and another pointed to a graphic organizer that he had used to record facts for his draft report about immigration. In a few other classrooms, the use of visuals to support learning included brief video clips with minimal content to support deep understanding, as was the case in an earth science lesson with a video about plate tectonics.

- In most classrooms visited, instructional strategies did not consistently provide additional activities or extensions of tasks for the most advanced learners. In a grade twelve computer science class, the teacher invited students to log in to Google Classroom to explore the application of, “script variables and conditionals to solve programming problems.” Students used their laptops to manipulate variables in a coding task presented online by the teacher. They explored coding by adding their own interactive features to the online platform. Several experimented with interchanging numbers to keep an online responder engaged in a guessing game via an interactive feature that stated when a guess was correct. All students extended their learning by adding their own twist to the activity. On the other hand, in a Global History class, grade ten students did not have a similar opportunity to explore an extension of the task of reading about, “the worst mistake in human history;” they spent most of the observed time in a teacher-led question and answer session, followed by use of their laptops to transcribe the teacher’s notes from a whiteboard to their Google Classroom page.
Findings

Driven by the school’s focus on specialized education in arts and technology, school leaders and teachers are engaged in ongoing alignment of curricula to Common Core and other applicable learning standards. Using student work and data, teachers collaborate to develop learning tasks for cognitive engagement of all students in lesson activities across content areas and grades.

Impact

Students at diverse proficiency levels consistently have access to curricula that allow them to be cognitively engaged in standards-based learning activities across grades and disciplines.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams collaboratively refine curriculum maps and units of study to align all curricula to Common Core Learning Standards, content-specific focus standards known as Wagner standards, as well as other relevant standards across grades and disciplines. Curricula include content for core courses that offer students opportunities to complete tasks such as problem-solving in math and writing evidence-based position papers in all content areas. A task for a computer science course involves students researching an innovation and using a poster and evidence from texts to write an essay that describes how the innovation impacts the economy and life in general. Curricula for Advanced Placement (AP) courses in computer science, literature and composition, and Spanish language and culture, round out offerings that further expose students to college and career awareness activities. Curricula also include content for a variety of interest-based extracurricular activities that are offered to all students, leading to multiple opportunities for students to explore careers and interests beyond the regular curricula for the school day.

- In addition to curricula for all core disciplines, there are curricula and tasks for the CORE program, which targets learning about academic habits, social-emotional skills and college and career readiness skills. Further, electives and project-based learning in specialized areas such as music, theater arts, visual arts, media, and technology extend student access to curricula designed to accelerate their readiness for the next grade and for college and careers. Curricula also include content for a variety of interest-based extracurricular activities that are offered to all students, leading to multiple opportunities for students to explore careers and interests beyond the regular curricula for the school day.

- As part of planning based on student work, unit plans and some lesson plans offer students access to cognitively engaging tasks. For example, a literacy task required students to read, *The Things They Carried*, a Vietnam War memoir, and to write a narrative that makes connections between themes in the novel and experiences in their own lives. Tasks for the new AP course in computer science further illustrate the use of student work and data to address the needs of diverse learners. A professional learning calendar and minutes of team meetings indicate that teachers are currently using data from recent assessments to revise curriculum maps, including those for CORE classes, to further infuse content and skills that reflect grade and department goals, embed content specific Wagner standards, and provide for additional focus on differentiation of tasks for the lowest and highest achieving students.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment
Rating: Proficient

Findings
Using online data management tools, such as Google Docs and Data Driven Classroom (DDC) apps, all teachers implement common assessments to generate data on student performance and to inform adjustments to curricula and instruction. Ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment are evident across classrooms.

Impact
Across classrooms, assessment practices result in adjustments to curricula and instruction to address students’ diverse learning needs and self-assessment activities by students.

Supporting Evidence

- Common assessments, such as Performance Series diagnostic assessments, unit assessments, end of marking period, and midterm and final exams across grades and departments, allow teachers to gather data and analyze trends in student performance and progress and implement adjustments to improve student performance on subsequent assessments. Some teachers described the use of the DDC exam creator and other applications of Skedula, an online teacher-facing data portal, to outline student strengths and areas of needs and determine next steps in preparing students for Regents exams. Teachers are implementing adjustments based on detected student needs, with some teachers working with students on re-taking assessments to improve the initial level of mastery and several providing students with additional skills building time through interventions that target their needs.

- Interviews of students indicated that the practice of having students use rubrics to self-assess and to monitor their own work is consistent across grades and content areas. During the meeting with students, in describing their work samples some students spoke about using rubrics to determine what is needed for a high rating on an assignment. One student noted that in responding to a task linked to the reading of the play, Othello, she used a rubric to assess whether her writing about “reputation versus character” met the rubric criteria for all evidence to be fully explained and relevant to claims made in her response. Other students stated that they regularly assess their learning to set goals for improving their performance. Several referenced their use of a college readiness tracker to reflect on their performance across assessments.

- Across classrooms, teachers check for understanding via practices such as the use of exit tickets, focus questions, individual and small group conferencing, and group and partner share-outs. Some teachers follow up immediately on findings. In a grade eleven ELA class, where students sat with peers as part of an inner or outer circle, in preparation for a Socratic seminar, the teacher listened to individual responses to peer-generated questions across the room and kept reminding students to use more text-based evidence to support their points. Based on the responses, the teacher added that students should look at all criteria on the rubric and determine whether they were deserving of a rating of “distinctive, competent” or “needs review.” She ended the lesson by asking her own follow-up questions that pushed students to sustain or re-think their positions. This interactive and immediate use of feedback from checks for understanding was not noted in a few of the other classrooms visited.
Additional Finding

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings

Through multi-media tools and technology-based systems, including PupilPath and Google Apps for Education, school leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations for high levels of mutual accountability for teaching and learning across the school. All staff members communicate expectations to and partner with families to support all students in meeting college and career readiness goals.

Impact

A culture of high expectations promotes shared accountability for improving teaching and learning and contributes to strong partnerships among staff and families that result in student progress towards meeting the expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Interviews of teachers indicate that through team discussions at faculty conferences, emails, one-to-one meetings, and dissemination of information via Skedula and Google Docs, school leaders ensure that all staff members are well informed about expectations for instruction, professional development and other areas of school operations. In alignment to best practices highlighted by the Danielson Framework for Teaching, school leaders place emphasis on effective questioning, on differentiation of instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners, on the use of strategies that maximize student engagement, and on ways to assess student learning. A Wagner Standards document, collaboratively developed by school leaders, teachers, and other staff, generates shared accountability for all expectations by further delineating expectations for schoolwide communication and feedback practices around targeted skills in all content areas. School leaders view lessons and review teacher reflection notes, instructional plans, and student work, to add support for mutual accountability for all expectations.

- To improve their pedagogy, all teachers receive on-site professional development linked to their needs. Additionally, some teachers receive professional development at sites that feature training in instructional strategies, such as the use of data to inform instruction and curriculum refinement. Participants at teacher team meetings noted that peers sometimes model teaching strategies for other teachers, and a professional learning calendar shows that several teacher leaders collaborate with school leaders and external support specialists to facilitate professional learning events for all staff. Teachers reported being trained to implement the Wagner Standards for their content area, use Google Apps for communication with students and families, and to incorporate the Google Classroom platform as an online tool to maximize student engagement in learning.

- All staff members use tools such as newsletters, emails, free Gmail accounts, course syllabi, progress reports, and texts, to communicate high expectations for learning to all families. Families also stated that via workshops, curriculum presentations, scholarship reports and letters with course guidelines and expectations, they team up with school staff to help prepare their children for college and beyond. Additionally, through an appointment-based parent conference structure, families meet with a CORE advisor who updates them about their children’s progress towards academic and personal goals. During the meeting with families, several stated that they are also kept informed of their children’s progress towards graduation expectations, via PupilPath online reports. Some families described an open house and a meet and greet event where staff members shared information about school expectations and tips for accessing online instructional resources. These collaborations strengthen home-school partnerships, as evidenced by data showing 100 percent of high school parents attending the most recent parent-teacher conferences, by appointment.
## Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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### Findings

Based on protocols and practices aligned to the Department of Education's *Handbook for Professional Learning*, teams of teachers systematically examine their pedagogy and share strategies for improving teaching and learning. Distributed leadership structures are evident across the school community.

### Impact

All staff members assume mutual responsibility for collectively improving teacher practice and student performance and play an integral role in high-level decisions about student learning schoolwide.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders provide all teachers with programs that articulate specific times for planning with peers on teams, including five grade teams and six department teams. Using the applicable Wagner Standards and a student work protocol notes sheet, teams meet regularly to examine student work and use a Google Form document to note findings, wonderings and next steps. Teachers analyze both quantitative and qualitative data to determine the effectiveness of teaching practices and intervention strategies and to outline additional interventions to address student needs. For example, with the aid of the New Visions Strategic Data Check tool, advisors analyze and plan interventions for students who are not making adequate progress towards promotion and graduation requirements. The 2016-2017 professional learning calendar and minutes of meetings reference the use of data from this tool to inform credit gap and marking period grade analysis, leading to instructional interventions to help students get on track.

- Teacher teams, such as the social studies team observed during the Quality Review, examine samples of work derived from end-of-unit assessments, as a first step in planning how to improve student performance on the next unit of instruction. Teachers on that team used a student work protocol template to closely look at work generated from a grade six history task about life in ancient Mesopotamia. A facilitator presented information about the task, including the use of a handout to outline annotation strategies, highlighting of some vocabulary words, and the addition of a video clip to further illustrate problems faced by people in Mesopotamia during that era. After a silent review of the work samples, participants cited student strengths and weaknesses and discussed the effectiveness of the strategies used to help the students navigate the text to complete the task. They followed up with a discussion of how they would incorporate one or more of the strategies into lessons for students in their respective classes and suggested additional strategies for the presenting teacher to consider when designing the next unit or lesson.

- Teachers at one of the team meetings stated that they provide essential input in school-level decision-making, through team leaders who meet bi-weekly with members of the administrative team and then with their respective department or grade-level team, to implement ideas generated at weekly team leader meetings. Teacher leaders include the grade and department leaders who work with all staff on initiatives that target improved student outcomes. In collaboration with school leaders, they support all teams with instructional resources, contribute regularly to data gathering and analysis, and reflect on team activities via Google Forms. They also set the agenda for team meetings and facilitate professional learning events for all staff. In collaboration with peers on other teams they are integral in infusing teacher voice in schoolwide decision making that leads to improvement in student performance and teacher practice, as evidenced by movement of graduation rate from 83 percent in the 2014-2015 school year to 87 percent in 2015-2016, and by the increase seen in Regents pass rates for the 2015-2016 school year.