Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Susan E. Wagner High School
High school 31R460
1200 Manor Road
Staten Island
NY 10314

Principal: David Cugini

Dates of Review:
April 17, 2018 - April 18, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Marion Wilson
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

Susan E. Wagner High School serves students in grade 9 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<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>Additional Finding</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>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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>Additional Finding</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>Area of Celebration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</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</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</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</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>Area of Focus</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</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate elevated expectations to staff, parents, and students.

Impact
As a result, there are well-coordinated systems for accountability along with a strategic support system to help all stakeholders achieve expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Expectations are communicated through a sophisticated system including verbal, written, and a web-based portal. There is a well-maintained school website and online collaboration tools where expectations are consistently communicated with a system of supports. All staff members have access to and are part of creating the instructional expectations comprehensive document. School leaders and teachers ensure that there is a positive learning environment in each class with certain look-for’s that should be present. For example, each lesson should have an aim, learning objective, success criteria, opportunities for accountable talk using a schoolwide text coding protocol, and a self-assessment tool to be used during lessons. Teachers and administrators, cooperatively, decided that a strategic emphasis should be put on effective questioning and student discussions to help build deeper student engagement. There is a culture of mutual accountability where stakeholders hold each other accountable but also support each other to achieve expectations There are regular intervisitations, professional learning sessions, teamwork, and learning walkthroughs. As a result, there are well-coordinated efforts to ensure teachers are held accountable, but are also provided support through professional learning and additional resources to help them meet those expectations.

- Staff members provide clear lines of verbal and written communication to families about graduation and college and career expectations. Parents shared that ongoing communication allows them to know the expectation for quality student work, the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards, and student performance on standardized assessments. During the parent meeting, parents shared that each academy has a parent president who helps to coordinate communication among parents, as well as, the school’s concentrated learning center meetings to help parents understand what is required of their child in the post-secondary realm. Parents are partners with the school and serve on curricula teams, suggest workshops, and spearhead many activities that support each other in understanding what is required of their children in a post-secondary environment.

- Teachers and other staff have a set of clear, systematic structures, which articulate high expectations for students entering the workforce or going to college through the academy structure at the school. There are various learning centers, which have an exclusively assigned administrator, teacher-coordinator, guidance counselor, and dean to support students. This strategic system is leading to student progress towards college and career readiness expectations. Learning centers are centered on finance, language and culture, sciences, exploration, law and politics, and the performing arts to name a few. Students shared that they are held accountable by the school and the tenets of each learning center to be prepared for the next level in their lives. In addition to visits to colleges, students have opportunities to take college level courses at St. John’s University. During the school visit, students presented their senior year portfolio projects, which is very close to a thesis level presentation.
Findings

Most teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that are centered on the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the instructional shifts. Teacher teams also analyze data such as quizzes, mock Regents exams, and unit exams for students they share.

Impact

Even though structured teacher team collaborations are strengthening the instructional capacity of most teachers, it has not resulted in schoolwide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for certain subgroups. The analysis of student work and assessments is resulting in improved progress for most students, but has not resulted in mastery of goals for some students.

Supporting Evidence

- Most teacher teams collaborate using a structured protocol to look at student work and focused on building students’ academy vocabulary and strengthening their conceptual understanding. Teachers work together to review student work, adapt and revise curricula, modify teaching strategies, and create an action plan to support the varied learners in their classes. The school has impact teams for each department. Impact teams use the evidence analysis action (EAA) protocol to examine multiple pieces of student work on a common assessment and then determine why students were not able to reach proficiency or demonstrate mastery. Members of teams share information through an online collaboration tool that captures minutes of their work to date, as well as, their next steps. During the visit, algebra teachers were looking at sample student work from a recent task to make sense of how many students were successful in completing the task and how many experienced challenges. Teachers shared next steps on how to assist students who demonstrated proficiency and how they could support students who struggled, especially those with learning disabilities. The impact team reviewed work in relation to the standards for math practice that they felt would be most helpful for students. Most teams are engaged in structured protocols, however the results from most of the teams has not led to increased student achievement for all learners.

- Most teacher teams analyze varied assessment data to inform how they will group students and the types of interventions that will be used to support students. In a math task, students had to respond to the following prompt, “Which value of the quadratic function determines the width of your parabola? Explain how you can use that value to determine the width of your parabola.” While most teacher teams consistently analyze different types of data, there were missed opportunities for systematic analysis across grades and departments. A vertical teaming structure is being explored to ensure that there is mastery of goals for special populations.

- Most teacher teams conduct an analysis of student work using a structured protocol and review student work products to help inform their decisions about teaching practices and strategies they will implement to tailor instruction to meet students’ learning needs. For example, during the visit, teachers decided that they needed to revise the success criteria for the lesson to ensure it was more closely aligned to the lesson’s objectives. Teachers also shared that the rubric needed to be further revised so that, teachers across the department could calibrate and norm their expectations for quality student work related to the criteria that were being used for greater consistency. During the team meeting that was observed, one teacher shared, “We have to make sure a level three in your class is the same type of work as a level three in my own class.” Teachers agreed that the work of teacher teams has led to improvement in student learning.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Curricula is aligned to Common Core and content standards, and integrate key instructional shifts, which helps to build coherence across departments and subjects. The curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits.

Impact

The school’s curricula promote college and career readiness for most students and higher-order thinking skills are planned across the grades and subjects to allow access for a diversity of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The school aligns curricula units and lessons based on the Common Core and other content area standards across most grades and subjects. Curricula documents promote coherence because of the online platform for sharing curricula documents with similar common elements contained within plans. Most written curricula documents contain learning objectives, which are listed as, “I can” statements and written in student friendly language; aligned to content standards; success criteria for the lesson; types of assessment strategies; and strategies for small group instruction. For example, the aim in a chemistry plan was, “How can we determine the molarity of an unknown solution?” Students were required to identify the standardized solution used during a titration, then calculate the volume of the solution, and use the data collected to calculate the concentration. In a forensic lesson plan, students were required to conduct an analysis of DNA samples to match.

- Curricula and academic tasks require most students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities to engage with challenging content. Activities require students to cite evidence, justify claims, support positions, engage in disciplined inquiry and thought, and deal with ambiguity. Challenging learning activities are supplemented with videos, graphic organizers, dictionaries, highlighters, annotated notes, and technology to support a diversity of learners. Most tasks, such as group projects, independent assignments, and partner activities allow for multiple means of students’ representing their thinking by presenting PowerPoints or charting their work on chart papers. Similarly, tasks are planned to afford students different ways of engaging with materials through vignettes, video presentation, researching information on the internet, translation tools, and leveled text. There is a differentiation chart that accompanies most lesson plans, which highlights the needs of individual students with disabilities and ensures that the activity is rigorous and supports the students’ learning needs.

- Curricula documents have enduring understandings, essential questions, and key skills that students must successfully complete in each chapter or unit of study. Most planning documents integrate the instructional shift of building student’s academic vocabulary, close reading and annotating text, as well as citing text evidence to strengthen arguments to try to build coherence throughout the school. These processes often require students to apply skills learned, solve real world problems, and demonstrate their critical thinking ability. For example, in an English Language Arts task, students had to review the following excerpt from a text, “What of this goldfish, would you wish?” and then provide three pieces of evidence that supports the claim. The graphic organizer included notes and hints for students, who needed the extra scaffold. Similarly, in a reading plan, the objective was for students to identify an author’s purpose through understanding the use of satire, cite text evidence, determine the central idea, and interpret figures of speech.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Across most classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect common articulated beliefs about how students learn beset. Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide scaffolds of support to allow students entry into the curricula.

Impact

While teaching practices are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts, there were missed opportunities for student ownership of their learning. In addition, in some classes activities did not provide extensions or enrichment to promote high levels of engagement for students performing above level.

Supporting Evidence

- Instructional activities support the school beliefs for the most part, where students have opportunities to engage with challenging material, use accountable talk to collaborate with their peers, and self-assess their work against established criteria. Most classrooms visited provided opportunities for engaging activities to support diverse learners. There was a missed opportunity for all students to be engaged in a science class where the objective was, “Use the Earth Science reference table to complete a data table worksheet about different weather stations on a particular day.” Students filled in the wind direction based on the wind speed, atmospheric pressure, and temperature. Students shared that the fill-in the blank task was easy and the answer was apparent because once they had the formula it was a matter of applying it to the data table. However, in a social studies class, students had to respond to an inquiry question, “Should Asoka be remembered as a ruthless conqueror or an enlightened ruler?” Students close read different documents to complete a task sheet and align evidence that supports either claim, and their reasoning, lingering questions, and thoughts about their findings.

- Teachers plan lessons includes small instructional groups based on mixed ability levels such as high, medium, and low or pairing a non-English speaker with an English speaker. In a math class, the objectives were, “I can identify the center and radius of a circle if given its equation. I can convert an equation from general quadratic form to standard quadratic form by completing the square.” Students were examining other samples of student work on the interactive whiteboard and were working together to figure out in which step did an error occur to justify the correct response. Students had the success criteria listed and used each other to provide ratings and feedback on the student work. Accountable talk stems were affixed to each students’ desk along with color-coded packets that included strategies for success based on the students’ math levels. In addition, there was a text-coding rubric associated with the task that had clues and hints based on their ability to construct viable arguments, and critique the reasoning of others.

- Most teachers use strategies including scaffolds, tiered questioning, and multiple entry points to create a variety of ways for students to access the content or task. Observed during class visits were dictionaries, laptops for students to use to complete activities, highlighters, post it notes, hands on materials, leveled readers, and graphic organizers. In a reading class, the aim of the lesson was, “How does the poet of Beowulf use characterization and setting to establish the themes of good vs. evil and the heroic code?” Students had to work cooperatively to analyze the text and then make inferences about the theme. In a few classes, the Webb’s Depth of Knowledge wheel was included on the activity sheet to help students make meaning of the types of questions they were required to answer.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers create common assessments aligned to content and Common Core standards, which help to determine student progress toward goals. Teachers check for understanding by asking questions, collecting exit slips, and observing students working in small groups.

Impact

The school’s assessment practices help teachers make modifications and effectively adjust curricula and instruction to meet most students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The results from diagnostic, benchmark, performance tasks, and final exams help teachers in each department select priority standards that they want to focus on to identify errors and misconceptions in student learning. These assessments allow teachers to pinpoint skills and focus areas for curricula mapping and the use of certain teaching strategies. They also determine student progress in relation to the relevant content standards. When teachers noticed that there was a gap in the types of questions being asked to support the needs of students, teachers utilized the Webb’s Depth of Knowledge question stems to ensure more levels three and four questions were incorporated on day-to-day basis. When data trends revealed that students were not supporting their thinking with quality evidence, teachers introduced a Frayer model to help them elaborate on their responses in paragraph format. Teachers revise pacing calendars, update curricula planning documents, and supplement curricula resources based on the results of assessment data.

- Most teachers monitor student understanding during lessons by asking questions, performing mid-workshop interruptions to gauge the level of student understanding, and taking the pulse of student learning. Teachers also circulate throughout their classrooms to observe students. Some take notes of how students participate, and how well they respond to the day’s focused skill. In one class, teachers used an exit slip to gauge student understanding of the lesson and utilized this information as the rationale for the guided group work the following day. In another class, students self-assessed themselves using the provided criteria for participation and performance to help teachers monitor their progress during the lesson. Most teachers noted students’ rating of themselves to see who would need additional support or which students could be provided with enrichment activities.

- There are varied checks for understanding used, for teachers to make effective on-the-spot adjustments to meet students’ learning needs. These checks include, but are not limited to, peer and self-assessments, using individual whiteboards, entrance and exit slips, response logs, student-to-student discussion, and observation of students while they work in groups. In a math class, the teacher walked around and listed to students work, using a protocol for discussion and took anecdotal notes about what students were saying to gauge the breadth and depth of student understanding. In another class, students had a small group participation rubric to self-assess their cooperation and contribution to the group’s activity examining different types of rocks. Students had to complete a Socratic Seminar self-assessment participant rubric, and write their goals for the upcoming seminar and an opportunity to request additional help from the teacher.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

Teachers are observed on a regular basis and are provided feedback that illustrates their strengths, areas of growth, and next steps for improvement. Feedback to teachers is accurate and aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

**Impact**

As a result, teachers are demonstrating growth in their ability to plan rigorous tasks and engaging lessons to meet the needs of most students. Feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice and supports their continued development.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders have ongoing cycles of observations of classroom practice that helps teachers understand their strengths and challenges. Each administrator provides feedback based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching and shares the next steps for improved practice depending on the rating received from the observation. School leaders focus observation feedback on helping teachers understand that students need to use multiple skills to complete tasks and that they need both actionable and meaningful feedback aligned to standards to help them understand who they are as learners. Evidence reviewed during the school visit, illustrated that teachers are receiving feedback aligned to the abovementioned foci areas. In one observation report, it stated, “You should ensure that you have multiple means of helping students to represent their thinking, engage in lessons, and make meaning of the learning activity.” Most teachers communicated that they receive feedback that is helping to strengthen both their understanding of the components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, as well as their use of effective teaching practices.

- Most teachers can articulate how they use the feedback they receive from administrators to improve their practices. During the teacher team meeting, teachers shared that their professional goals aligned to the school’s overall mission and vision of helping students become determined to graduate and engage in relevant work that is student centered. As a result, more teachers are creating more student-centered learning opportunities and strengthening the use of performance tasks across grades and subjects. There are regular cycles of observations and walkthroughs conducted which provides immediate post-observation feedback to teachers to ensure they have a better understanding of the expectations of effective teacher practice.

- Regular feedback to teachers also reference the school’s instructional focus for the year. The focus is, “If the teachers and administrators provide rigorous and relevant instructional tasks that challenge our students, then students will be engaged in complex thinking. This will result in student ownership, collaboration, and reflection to improve academic performance.” Feedback refers to how well teachers are planning and preparing to provide these types of opportunities in lessons for their students. Most teachers feel that the feedback from administration is helping them to hone their practices in constructing more challenging lessons, with literacy protocols to help their diverse learners. For example, teachers shared that they have improved in being able to offer many supports during lessons for building academic vocabulary for students, which is helping more students have access to the demands of the Common Core.