NYC **Department of Education**
Education
Chancellor Richard A. Carranza

Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Wadleigh Secondary School for the Performing & Visual Arts

Secondary School 03M415

**215 West 114 Street
Manhattan
NY 10026**

Principal: Daisy Fontanez

**Dates of Review:
May 10, 2018 - May 11, 2018**

Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen

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

Wadleigh Secondary School for the Performing & Visual Arts serves students in grade 6 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

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school...	**Area**	**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	**Area of Focus**	**Developing**
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 Finding**	**Developing**
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 Finding**	**Developing**

School Quality Ratings continued

School Culture

To what extent does the school...	Area	Rating
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults	**Additional Finding**	**Developing**
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	**Additional Finding**	**Developing**

Systems for Improvement

To what extent does the school...	Area	Rating
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	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
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	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
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	**Area of Celebration**	**Proficient**
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	**Additional Finding**	**Developing**
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	**Additional Finding**	**Developing**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

School leaders use frequent cycles of classroom observations to provide teachers with effective feedback that accurately captures pedagogical strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

Impact

The feedback received by teachers promotes professional growth and reflection by communicating clear next steps for improvement.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal and assistant principals regularly observe all teachers over the course of the school year. Teachers noted that they receive regular ongoing feedback that is useful. One teacher noted that her ability to improve in facilitating Socratic seminars is a direct result of repeated observation feedback. Another stated that she has received specific and valuable feedback about her instruction of individual students.

- An observation report reveals that an assistant principal encouraged a teacher to have students use vocabulary words in sentences that clearly evidence their understanding of the word. The report acknowledged how a student's sentence "I have an oculus in my attic" was validated by the teacher who responded with, "Yes, that's usually where they are." However, the written feedback from the assistant principal to the teacher pointed out that any noun could have been substituted for "oculus," and the teacher led the student to think that such a sentence was good enough.

- Feedback in a number of observation reports regularly emphasized the need for more questioning and discussion. One such report directed the teacher to provide opportunities for students to talk to each other, whether in small groups or as a whole. To support this effort, the recommendation was made to use *Depth of Knowledge* (DOK) stems to assist in phrasing questions.

- In addition to challenges, pedagogical strengths are also conveyed in reports including the effective scaffolding of Regents questions, enabling students to work on their own, providing opportunities for students to question each other creating student generated discussion, and the effective monitoring of student learning while working in groups.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	**1.1 Curriculum**	**Rating:**	**Developing**

Findings

Curricular documents reflect the need for deeper alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and integration of the instructional shifts. Curricula do not consistently reflect planning informed by student work and data.

Impact

The promotion of college and career readiness for all students and curricular coherence are not emphasized in the school's approach to curricular design. Academic tasks and learning experiences do not consistently reflect planning that ensures that all students have access that would enable them to be cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- In two lesson plans, citing specific textual evidence is noted as a literacy standard informing the design of learning activities, yet in both cases, no specific text is referenced in the lesson. In the social studies plan, students are to brainstorm historical characters, events, and themes from the musical *Hamilton* and come up with prompts that might inform an essay. In a science plan, students would be creating short stories, comic strips, poems, or spoken word pieces based on a video about the nervous system. A lack of alignment results from either the exclusion of an intended learning expectation or a misunderstanding of how the standard is embedded in a learning activity.

- A standard listed in an English Language Arts (ELA) lesson plan is "analyzing how an author develops and contrasts points of view of different characters." However, the task was to write a piece of historical fiction. The checklist for completion included being thoughtful about setting, dialogue, dress, relationships, facts, and events– all informed by a specific historical period. There was no emphasis placed on the perspective or point of view of a character, nor the comparison of one character's point of view with another's. Although the task was appropriately challenging, this lesson plan does not position students to analyze, which is the key action in the learning standard.

- A middle school math lesson plan contains tiered activities based on student ability. There are prompts to inform how the teacher would support each group. For one group, the teacher would remind them of the difference between independent and dependent variables. Another group would use equations to record data, and the teacher would reinforce how to enter data into a table. The planning document for an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) middle school science class noted that some students would receive an argument template organizer with examples while some strategically would not. In addition, an English Language Learner (ELL) would be allowed to explain his thoughts in Spanish. A bilingual member of his group would incorporate his ideas into their group poster, as needed. Such planning to engage all learners was not evident across planning documents. Specifically, two social studies, a math, an ELA, and a science lesson plan reflected no evidence of addressing varying student abilities or learning needs in the design of academic tasks.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings

Teaching practices are beginning to reflect the school's instructional focus on writing and discussion but are uneven across classrooms.

Impact

All students are not able to produce meaningful work products as there are uneven levels of student thinking and participation during instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- In two high school social studies classes, instruction was focused on a percentage of the students while the orders had no clear task or role in the lesson. In a United States History and Government class, approximately half the students stood in pairs near large sheets of chart paper, writing down responses to questions posed by the teacher. Their classmates sat at desks watching and listening, but with no accountability to engage in the conversation. In addition, no primary or secondary sources were used to support student understanding of history, just their recollections from a musical. Similarly, in a Global History class, a discussion intended to include the entire class as everyone sat in one large circle took place. However, in its execution, only approximately eight students regularly contributed while seven students were silent and unengaged. Those who actively participated shared numerous opinions, but they were not encouraged to ground them in the reading they had done in preparation for the discussion. In both classes, the execution of the lessons evidenced a lack of student engagement and rigor, compared to what was designed in the curricula.

- The teacher in an algebra class repeatedly asked students process oriented questions such as, "What do we get on the inside?" and "What did we do to those binominals yesterday?" However, she rarely utilized sufficient wait time, resulting in many unanswered questions as she continued to progress through the lesson. When she directed students to discuss with peers, most students did not comply, and there was little evidence of prompting, encouraging or reminding them to talk to each other. Lastly, conceptual understanding was inconsistent, as a number of students did not know the meaning of the term "factor," although they could explain how to do it.

- Students in an ICT science class were assigned the task of working in groups to do research and create presentations on topics within cell biology. However, the levels of research, writing, understanding, and participation varied across the room. One student started working on the chart for her presentation, but had not read the entire article. Another student had the term "immortal cell" at the top of her presentation board, but she could not explain what it meant. In a third group, when a student was asked what he had done research on, he read from a paper of a group member who had actually done the research. He was not able to make any meaning of it in his own words.

Quality Indicator:	**2.2 Assessment**	**Rating:**	**Developing**

Findings

The assessment practices used across classrooms are loosely aligned to the curricula, providing limited feedback that does not consistently offer a clear portrait of student mastery. The use of checks for understanding and student self-assessment is inconsistent across classrooms.

Impact

Students are not completely aware of their next steps towards excellence in their work. Teachers across grades and subject areas do not consistently make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- A student was able to explain that in order to improve in the skill of elaboration, she would need to give credit to her sources, and another student was able to share that transitions "are the way that you take somebody from one place to another." In the criteria within a writing rubric, "demonstrates control of conventions," a student received a score of four out of five. However, he did not know what conventions were.

- A student received a score of 4.75 out of 5. Written feedback included a number of things that the student did correctly, including introducing a precise claim, demonstrating thorough analysis of the claim, and presenting her ideas adequately while exhibiting logical organization. The student had no idea what she could have done differently to earn the .25 points needed to get a perfect score.

- Choral students were provided with rubrics as they sang in groups based on their voice types. After singing a part of a song composed by Mozart, the teacher stopped and asked each group to focus on a different part of the rubric. For example, she asked the altos to focus on ensemble balance and blend. She directed students to assess their singing and rate themselves as a group. She encouraged them to discuss with each other and determine why they agreed or disagreed. She then had them name three next steps they could use to improve. The sopranos stated that they could sustain their deep breaths. Another group chose to emphasize their energy and projection. Such a thoughtful structure for student self-assessment was not evident across classrooms.

- The teacher in a math class asked numerous questions during instruction to assess student understanding. He even asked, "How many of you are still confused?" Yet, he made no effort to understand student misconception and focused solely on correcting their confusion. Although such an approach appeared to help some, it did not address the learning needs of those who were still confused.

- After watching a brief video, students were to develop a short story, comic book, poem, or spoken word piece exploring how the nervous system provides numerous bodily functions, including activating muscles and glands, providing sensations, and maintaining body homeostasis. As the teacher circulated throughout the room, she focused on ensuring that students were working towards task completion, yet asked no questions to assess student understanding of how they were integrating the topic of the nervous system into their work. As a result, a number of students merely produced work based on something they remembered from the video, but were not able to articulate a connection to the functions of the nervous system.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Developing

Findings

School leaders and faculty are developing expectations and a culture of learning that can be communicated to students and families that provide a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Students and families do not regularly receive feedback and guidance regarding student performance that will prepare them for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Students have visited Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other schools. While on such visits, they had opportunities to speak with Wadleigh alumni. Some mentioned that as a result of these trips, college seemed to be more of a real option for them. One said that there is hope if you focus. Another commented that "regular kids like us go there," making the possibility of attending college more tangible. However, when asked what specific guidance they took from these conversations while on college visits, the responses were vague, such as "work harder" and "don't give up."

- The school has invested in an online platform designed to communicate information regarding student academic standing, assignment completion, assessment performance, and attendance. Students stated that most, but not all, teachers use the platform. As a result, students have to initiate to get information from teachers who do not use the platform regularly. In addition, the information is not always accurate. One student said, "In English, it said I had a 33 and it was actually a 90." Some students have to wait until the end of the semester to receive grades and clarity on how they were doing in the class.

- Parents also shared that they experience inconsistencies and inaccuracies with the information provided on the platform. According to them, not all teachers upload student information with fidelity, and they do not always receive up to date notification regarding their children's performance from teachers who do not use the platform. "We have to wait until parent teacher conferences, three weeks after the report cards come out," stated one parent. Another parent suggested that he can tell by his son's grades and how much information is on the website which teachers are trying to support his son. As an example, he shared that a science teacher, who did not consistently communicate with the parent regarding completed assignments, did not inform the father until June that his son was missing a number of labs.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development	Rating:	Developing

Findings

Teacher teams regularly analyze student work and data. Although school leaders are open to suggestions from teachers, structures for distributed leadership are developing.

Impact

The work of teacher teams does not typically result in improved teacher practice or progress towards goals for groups of students. The leadership capacity of teachers is developing, and they are beginning to have some voice in curricular decisions that affect teaching and learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- During a science team meeting, teachers had a protocol in their possession and began to review student data. They began by making observations such as some students' scores went down as compared to the pre-test, some did not complete their work, and some received perfect scores. During the round of interpretation, it became clear that one of the four teachers did not understand how the data was being presented. The facilitating colleague noted that it was the first time he had disaggregated the data in this manner and had to clarify the meaning of "pre-test" in this context. When discussing implications for instruction, the focus was on what the students needed to do, not the teachers. For example, "students need to arrive on time" and "they need to complete the work all of the time." They then discussed how the presenting teacher could increase student compliance by circulating around the classroom. Such suggestions did not serve to improve teaching practice. When the second teacher presented, the protocol was not used at all. After providing context, the presenting teacher engaged her colleagues in a conversation that immediately went into suggestions. Although this collegial input may have benefited the teacher, true analysis did not occur.

- The objective of a grade team meeting was for participants to analyze student writing. However, minutes from that meeting only indicate that student writing was analyzed and discussed based on a protocol. There was evidence of analysis but no instructional next steps were provided. Similarly, minutes from a history team meeting indicate that student work was analyzed, but reflected little to no evidence of the analysis. Suggestions were listed, such as making connections to something outside of the article, and that students need to answer questions more clearly using grammar that is specific, but the next steps for instruction were to "review student work." As was the case with most of the team meeting minutes reviewed, there was no sense of how the decisions made in team meetings directly impact instruction.

- Teachers spoke of how the school leaders listen and treat them respectfully, and when individual teachers make suggestions, particularly to improve their curricula, school leaders can be accommodating. For example, a teacher who wanted to embed activism-oriented learning into her ELA class was supported by leadership. The principal stated, "Any time a teacher has an idea, as long as it will benefit the kids, I'm for it." However, this openness and support for individuals that take initiative to enhance their instruction does not impact groups of teachers or the faculty as a whole.