



PRPLA is 'Partnership of the Year'

EducationDive.com recognizes Wagner College's Port Richmond Partnership Leadership Academy

On Monday, Dec. 4, the [Education Dive: K-12 Awards program](#) named Wagner College's [Port Richmond Partnership Leadership Academy](#) as its [Partnership of the Year](#). The academy, which represents a collaboration between Wagner and Port Richmond High School, is part of a larger college readiness program on Staten Island.

Other nominees for this year's partnership award were:

- NYC Schools and Warby Parker vision screening and eyeglasses program
- Drexel University and School District of Philadelphia resources partnership
- Rutgers University and Camden, NJ, civic engagement partnership
- Berea College Rural School Improvement Partnership (KY)

[Education Dive](#) is an online publication devoted to reporting on a broad array of education issues. It is a branch of Industry Dive, a company launched in 2012.

The Port Richmond Partnership Leadership Academy gives Staten Island high school students exposure to a college experience and the opportunity to improve their community.

Wagner College, a private, liberal arts institution, created the academy in collaboration with the New World Foundation's Civic Opportunities Initiative Network in 2013. Now, the college is expanding some of those same experiences to elementary and middle school students.

"The whole idea of the entire pipeline is to figure out what college readiness looks like at all these levels," says Kevin Bott, the dean of civic engagement at Wagner's Center for Leadership and Community Engagement.

The high school program targets sophomore students who would be the first in their families to attend college. The cohort of 12 participants takes part in an intensive five-week program that begins in the summer before their junior year. They take high school and college courses, complete service projects and spend time living on campus. They repeat the summer program before their senior year, and again before they enter college.

"They live like college students, and they are treated like college students," says Leo Schuchert, who served as a mentor for the students during the academy's first summer. He was also the first coordinator of the Wagner College Raiders Center, an office at Port Richmond High where students participate in weekly seminars that might include workshops, movies, debates, and reading assignments on issues such as poverty, immigration and hunger.

“These are kids who show a lot of promise and need the extra support,” Bott says, adding that by the time the academy students finish high school, “they’re ready for the rigors of the classroom, ready for the independence that a lot of first-generation college students don’t usually have.”

Last year, a similar academy program for 12 students was launched at Edwin Markham Intermediate School 51, and the coordinator of the Markham program also spends one day a week at P.S. 21 Margaret Emery-Elm Park School, where partnership leaders are conducting a needs assessment and implementing some college awareness programs for the elementary school students.

The college readiness initiative is part of the Port Richmond Partnership, a broader relationship between Wagner and the Port Richmond community that began in 2005 when Wagner College President Richard Guarasci and Timothy Gannon, the former principal at Port Richmond High, met for breakfast.

The Raiders Center at the high school serves as the hub for nonprofit organizations that work with Wagner as part of the partnership and offer students summer internships. Students, for example, have worked on a community asset map, built and tended a community garden and painted murals.

All students at the high school can also find college information at the Raiders Center, and other partnerships have evolved, such as a nutrition project involving Wagner College’s nursing students and the high school’s culinary arts program. Over time, students have developed what Gannon calls “college self-esteem” or the belief “that they can go to college and succeed in college.”

As Wagner College continues its work at the elementary and middle school levels in Port Richmond, leaders will continue to have lessons on how to establish strong partnerships as well as what it takes to give students, even in the early grades, a path toward postsecondary success and a desire to improve their communities.

QUICK FACTS — Port Richmond Partnership Leadership Academy

- Established: Fall of 2013
- Founded by: Wagner College and Port Richmond High School
- Funding sources: New World Foundation and Wagner College
- Five guiding pillars: Arts, Education, Health, Economic development, Immigration

EARLIER EDUCATION DIVE STORIES on Wagner College’s Port Richmond Partnership

- [March 17, 2017](#) — On the presentation made at the South-by-Southwest Edu conference (on March 7) by Wagner College President Richard Guarasci and several colleagues about partnerships between colleges and their communities.
- [Oct. 31, 2017](#) — About the partnership between Wagner College and Port Richmond High School