



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**William McKinley**

**Middle School 259**

**7301 Fort Hamilton Parkway  
Brooklyn  
NY 11228**

**Principal: Janice Geary**

**Dates of review: October 25 - 29, 2007**

**Lead Reviewer: Sandra Tweddell**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

William McKinley is a middle school with 1356 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 2% Black, 29% Hispanic, 29% White, and 39% Asian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 93.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 78% eligibility.

The school is currently at 140% capacity which puts severe restraints on scheduling. In 2006 three academies were created, one for grade 6, Making Connections Across Time, that offers an integrated approach to the curriculum. Math, Business and Academics and Developing Research Scientists are for combined grades 7 and 8. The school is an Urban Advantage Model school for Science, one of ten in New York.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is an inspiring, strategic and highly respected leader who sets the tone for the warm, inviting and intellectually rigorous environment.
- The cabinet is a dynamic group that gives exemplary leadership to meet the school's aims.
- The strengths of all who work in the building are utilized to the full to create the special school culture.
- All decisions are based not only on the analysis of data but also from academic research and surveys.
- Students are excited by the rich and varied curriculum.
- The cabinet's expectations of a challenging and supportive learning environment are seen in every classroom.
- The school has successfully reached out to parents and supports them well with their children's learning.
- Excellent links with a number of external groups enhance students' learning.
- Art work is of a very high quality and involves all students.
- Most students leave as confident young citizens because they receive a broad education and are valued as young adults.

### What the school needs to improve

- Extend the work on differentiated instruction to students who need enrichment.
- Continue to develop approaches to teaching students whose English is at an early stage.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is well developed.**

“The McKinley Experience” is how many people involved with the school describe its culture. Students thrive exceptionally well in an environment that treats them as young adults. They are taught a curriculum that effectively integrates learning across disciplines and is enhanced by visits to places of cultural interest. Students, their parents and teachers are very proud of the school. The principal is a thoughtful and rigorous leader who will accept nothing but the best from her staff and students. The cabinet supports her excellent leadership very well, each carefully chosen member successfully carrying out their responsibilities. All their decisions about the school are based on research, surveys from within the school and information from assessment.

Test results in English language arts dipped last year because of a large number of newly arrived English language learners who were not yet confident with the tests. This was anticipated and rigorous steps were taken to deal with this although it is too soon to see the outcome. The principal’s expectation that each classroom should provide an interesting and challenging learning environment is seen throughout the school. Students are usually engaged in their learning, thoroughly enjoying the many practical activities from which they learn very well. Professional development this year has successfully focused on differentiated instruction although there is still more to do, particularly for students who achieve highly. The teachers’ center that is on the site is used excellently as a resource.

More parents are now involved with the school and their child’s learning because of concerted efforts to reach out to them. There are also very good links with a wide range of groups outside the school, to support students’ learning. The school has gained an excellent reputation for its arts program and significant people have visited the school as a result. The visually exciting, large mural created by students in one hallway, depicting New York in the 1930s, intertwining Greek mythology with poetry and students’ own writing is but one justification for this reputation. By the end of grade 8, many students have gained high self-esteem and have good interpersonal skills because of the school’s special culture.

Since the last review, there has been a successful thrust on differentiated instruction. The impact of professional development on students’ achievement has been monitored and data on ethnicity has been studied and new systems developed as a result. The inquiry team is looking at the lowest performing third of students and tracking them to identify successful strategies. The school has had many changes in the past three years. The challenge now is to monitor the impact of these on achievement, prior to consolidating the new practices.

## **How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria**

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the student's progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school has a wealth of data for each student and uses technology very well as a tool to retrieve it, although there are sometimes difficulties as the technology is new. The principal has just appointed an assistant principal for assessment to monitor students' progress and to be alert to new systems as they appear. A compendium of most useful data, rigorously used, is a tribute to this work. The cabinet is trying to improve its understanding of students' performance when they enter the school and a skills based assessment has been piloted this year.

The school has an increasing number of special education students whose progress is carefully monitored by an assistant principal in conjunction with specialist staff. The increasing number of English language learners led to a drop in results in English language arts. This was anticipated before the tests when data was analyzed and new systems quickly planned as a result. These are now in place and are being monitored for their impact on learning. The cabinet rigorously compares data from year to year. Data showed that Hispanic boys were on a downwards spiral so the students were interviewed as to why and this has led to the addition of books on topics such as soccer and horror that interest them. The books also tackle the other issue that was picked up by monitoring, that boys did not do as well as the girls. The school constantly looks to other schools to compare performance and to learn from them. For example, Chinese bilingual students were identified as the weakest performing group and the school has actively sought a model from elsewhere in order to adjust their practices.

Professional development to help teachers understand how to use data is of a high quality and is tailored to the needs of individual staff. It is determined by conversation with students and teachers as well as the data from assessments. The staff developer continuously works with assigned teachers on their particular needs, and expertise from the teachers' center, which is on site, is continually available and used.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The Comprehensive Education Plan has goals based firmly upon analysis of data and sets out how teachers will know when the goals have been reached. Teachers have their own copy of the document, helpfully abbreviated to show the goals. This is a good working document. The plan is regularly revisited and amended in the light of new developments. Each teacher has a laptop with all the data and is increasingly confident in using it to understand how well each student is doing and where they need support. Individual students who are not making the gains they should, or groups of students who show regression are quickly identified and systems are set up to try to halt the decline. English language learners, for example, are now being taught in general education classes in addition to push in and pull out, in an attempt to improve their spoken English. The math

curriculum has been redesigned to raise the number of students attaining level 4 in the state tests.

The principal has exceptionally high expectations and students and their parents are left in no doubt about them. The school has worked extremely hard to involve parents in their child's education. Theme nights are held to draw parents in and sometimes goody bags are given out. The cabinet found that some parents had not received the questionnaires to canvas their views that were sent by the City so is now actively ensuring that all parents receive one. Parents report that they receive good information about their child's progress and how they can help them. The school has an open door policy and teachers will ring home if there is a problem. The result of this work is that parents' meetings are now very well attended and include curriculum events.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The curriculum is exceptionally rich and, as one parent put it, "magnificent". It is designed based on information from assessment. Grade 6 students are put into one academy where the curriculum is integrated. All teachers are responsible for teaching English language skills, and social studies and science teachers plan closely with English language arts. In all three academies, all students study the arts. Despite the lack of space that means that common planning time is difficult to arrange, all teachers regularly work together on planning. Curriculum organization for English language learners has been strengthened this year in the light of last year's test results, although it is too soon to see the impact of this. The result of the rich curriculum is that attendance is high because students enjoy school and learn well. A movie produced by students, *Phantom of the Opera*, explores the theme of the original production in a very sophisticated manner. The range of artistic techniques used by the students is imaginative and shows good understanding. Other art work throughout the school is of a very high quality.

Teachers are held accountable for their students' achievement through a range of initiatives such as analysis of data and expectations of the layout of their classrooms. Each classroom provides an interactive and stimulating learning environment.. Students are motivated by lessons that have a practical element, such as building machines or creating constructions to show the effect of force. In each lesson, students have the opportunity to work in pairs or groups so their learning is deepened. Teachers are clearer this year about how to differentiate instruction for their classes but the staff developer is aware that more needs to be done, especially for higher achieving students. Many teachers still see differentiation as sitting a high achiever next to a lower achiever rather than giving work that meets their individual learning needs. The budget is handled very skillfully and strategically. Appointments are made and resources allocated on the basis of need. One example amongst many is the recent appointment of the assistant principal for assessment. Safety of students is paramount especially in view of the overcrowding. Students learn to respect each other and themselves. An initiative set up by the guidance counselor, *I Love Me*, involved students in looking at their characteristics then talking to elementary students about why they valued themselves. Students reported that this was powerful learning. Teachers are also valued through systems that recognize effective work...These initiatives create the environment of mutual trust.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

Professional development of teachers is a rigorous and thoughtful process. The teachers' college is used very well to support this and the appointment of a staff developer has tightened procedures. The staff developer works closely with teachers of one to three years experience to develop their practice. Teachers of one year's experience are mandated to work with her. Teachers are free to attend courses outside of school and report back, and all are given reflection time. The newly appointed assessment leader works closely with the staff developer to identify areas for whole school improvement, such as differentiated instruction and addressing the needs of English language learners. The result of these strategies is that professional development is geared to individual needs. Teachers work closely across disciplines and within their academies to observe, reflect upon and discuss effective teaching and learning with a coach. Teachers who are new to the school are exceptionally well supported through a wide range of formal and informal induction, and can approach anyone if they have a problem.

Students are helped to achieve both personally and academically through a very wide range of services. Each academy has a dean and guidance counselors and students receive excellent personal guidance. A nurse on site is readily available. After-school activities cover academic, arts and sports events. As the school is heavily overcrowded, a zero tolerance approach to unsafe behavior is used very successfully. The school has excellent partnerships with a very wide range of organizations such as the Center for Arts Education, Circuit City and hospitals. Each academy has its own partnerships that reflect its theme. These partnerships enhance the students' learning and achievement.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is outstanding.**

The Comprehensive Education Plan is a thoughtful, working document, accessible to all, with measurable goals and success criteria. The abridged version is most helpful as it makes the school priorities very clear. Constant evaluation of the plan, teaching and systems is the norm for the school.

The progress of individual and groups of students is constantly monitored. Pilots of new interventions are studied for their effectiveness, such as the move to raise the achievement of Hispanic boys and English language learners. The school brought in a skills analysis assessment that was used for the first time this year. The information has been used exceptionally well to reshape teaching. Students at risk are targeted by guidance counselors, the dean of their academy and their teachers. Teachers use not only state assessments, but their own diagnostic tests to see how well students are doing. One example is an assessment that led to a review of how inferential skills are taught in English language arts. The vision for the school, that it is an "average school that does great things", is shared by students, parents and teachers and the cabinet works towards this through its high expectations and a tireless search for grants to support its work. The principal is rightly evaluating the new systems before consolidating them. Given the good progress over the past year, the school has excellent capability to grow further.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: William McKinley</b>	△	▶	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				X	

### Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				X	

### Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?				X	
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?					X
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				X	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>▶</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?					X
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?					X
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?					X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				<b>X</b>	

<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>▶</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other's classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another's instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?					X
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?					X
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?					X
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?					X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				<b>X</b>	

<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>▶</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
5.1 the school's plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school's plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?					X
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?					X
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to make strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?					X
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?					X
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?					X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				<b>X</b>	