



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

William McKinley

**Intermediate School 259
7301 FT Hamilton Parkway
Brooklyn
NY 1128**

Principal: Janice Geary

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Reviewer: Jean Mackie

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

William McKinley Intermediate School is located in the Bay Ridge area of Brooklyn. There are 1353 students enrolled, covering grades 6 to 8. The school has been eligible for Title 1 funding for the last three years.

Almost 38% of students are Asian, 31.6% are Hispanic, 28.2% are White and 2.3% are Black. The school has approximately 10% of students who have recently arrived in the country, most of whom have come from China with an increasing number coming from Yemen. This figure is slightly higher than those for similar and City schools.

The proportion of special education students is approximately 9% with a further 16% who are English language learners.

Attendance has shown a steady improvement over the last five years and, at 94.5% in 2005, was above that of similar and City schools.

The school is designed to accommodate 980 students so is currently operating at 137% capacity. It is one of only 10 schools to be selected as an Urban Advantage model school for science. Since September 2006, the students have been reorganized into three new academies, one of which is solely for 6th grade students to aid transfer from the elementary school. Of the other two academies, both of which include 7th and 8th grade students, one has a science and the other a mathematics/business focus.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The highly respected principal provides real drive and vision for the whole school community.
- There is a very strong team culture within the school, with all staff fully committed to both the personal and academic development of the students.
- The school has very high expectations of all of its students, who respond positively to the challenges that are set for them.
- Data is used very well to track and monitor the progress of the students.
- There is some very good instructional practice which both challenges and engages the students.
- The curriculum is well structured and provides good opportunities for all students to pursue their individual interests.
- Professional development is well planned to meet the needs of both the school as a whole and individual teachers.
- Meeting schedules ensure effective communication between all members of the school community and facilitate the continual review and evaluation of new initiatives.
- Relationships between students and adults are very good, reflecting the high level of mutual respect that exists within the school.
- Parents and students are very proud of the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue the drive to strengthen differentiated instruction through the refined use of data and the focus on accountable talk.
- Monitor the impact of professional development on student outcomes more systematically.
- Use the data regarding the relative performance of different ethnic groups more formally to look for patterns in learning and hence to inform the setting of goals and instructional practice.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The principal, ably supported by her cabinet, is the key driver behind the success of this school. In a comparatively short time since taking on her role as principal, she has established a very strong team spirit amongst the teachers and support staff. This is reflected by a common sense of purpose focused on developing both the academic and personal attributes of the students. As a result, there is a very positive climate in the school, with adults and students showing respect for one another.

While firmly based on the basics of literacy and mathematics, the curriculum has strong science and arts elements, which are much appreciated by the students. Some of the art work on display is of a particularly high standard. There is a strong focus on learning, which is often lively and challenging, and students respond well to instruction. Data is used well throughout the school to monitor performance at all levels and to inform instructional practice. A strong professional development program supports teachers well in their drive to secure further improvement. A clear and effective meeting schedule facilitates regular communication about progress with development priorities. It also ensures that the school runs well on a day-to-day basis.

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 student progress over time.

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

The school collects a good range of data, including formal test results and internally generated assessments, to both monitor performance and to track the progress of the students. Headline data is carefully scrutinized for trends and compared with the results of other schools so that the principal is able to benchmark outcomes against similar institutions. The data is shared with staff so that there is a common understanding of how the students are achieving across the school. The school has noted, for example, the decline in level 1 results at a time when the proportion of special education students is increasing. Performance across the grades, classes and different subjects is analyzed carefully and any significant differences noted with a view to further scrutiny and possible action. The school has identified that, historically, there has been a dip in performance in grade 7 and has reduced class size as a result to try to counter this.

Additional testing enables teachers to identify particular strengths and weaknesses in basic skills of literacy and mathematics so that lessons can be planned to reinforce areas of need. Conferencing and informal assessments in class also enable the teachers to establish a well-rounded picture of individual and group progress. The students are able to access their own test data electronically and this encourages them to track their own progress over time.

Special education students and those who are English language learners are carefully identified from the data so that a suitable support program can be planned. The school has noted the relative performance of different ethnic groups but recognizes the value of analyzing such data more formally.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The staffs’ strong commitment to ensure that all students achieve as well as they can underpins the effective use of data to set challenging goals for the future at individual, grade, subject and whole school level. This process is very much a collaborative exercise due to the strong team culture and well organized meeting schedules within the school. The different teams work well together so that there is strong ownership of the goals set and the plans that are developed to meet them. In English language arts, for example, data analysis showed that some students had a weakness in the skills of inference so these students were particularly targeted to ensure that further opportunities were provided to enable them to consolidate their understanding and competence in that area.

Teachers and support staff work closely together to analyze the performance of special education students and English language learners so that they can set realistic but challenging targets for them. Next learning steps are subsequently planned with care. The formalization of goals for different ethnic groups is an action that the school recognizes it needs to take.

Students and their parents are well aware of the school’s high expectations. Parents appreciate both the efforts taken by the school to ensure that their children are doing as well as they can and the regular information about their progress. The students themselves know their targets and are keen to reach them. They talk about their work with enthusiasm and value the regular feedback from their teachers. The school is effective in ensuring that its aims and goals for the students are fully understood and supported by the wide range of institutions to which it is linked. As a Beacon School site, the local community is also actively involved in this process.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The curriculum is well balanced, covering statutory requirements and enriched by a stimulating arts program, which is effective in nurturing the talents of the young artists, dancers and musicians within the school. The recently established academies allow 7th and 8th grade students to follow either a science or mathematics/business themed approach to their studies. This development has been enthusiastically received by both students and parents.

The teachers are fully aware of their accountability to maximize student outcomes. They use data well to group the students in their classes according to the tasks that are being set. In this way they are able to focus support where it is most needed. The high expectations of teachers are evident in the way that they challenge students, for example, to either explain how they have tackled a mathematical problem or present some scientific findings to the rest of the class. The focused support for English language learners has also resulted in a good number of students developing sufficient competency in English to enable them to join mainstream classes. Special education students are equally well supported. Throughout the school, there is a strong focus on learning and the students respond positively, showing real engagement in their lessons. As part of its current drive for improvement, the school wishes to strengthen practice by further refining the use of data so that differentiated instruction is even more effective and allows for increased opportunities for accountable talk.

The positive culture within the school results in very good relationships between adults and students. Mutual respect is evident and students feel comfortable about approaching adults if they have concerns or worries.

The principal has used her budget judiciously to ensure that staffing, scheduling and resources meet the needs of the students within her care. She and her team have also been extremely successful in acquiring grants that support the enhanced programs on offer.

Despite good and improving attendance, it remains a high priority with rigorous systems in place to tackle absenteeism.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

The principal's clear vision for the school has been the key driver behind the appointments that she has made. With her commitment to collegiality, she has built up a team which shares a common sense of purpose, with both teachers and support staff fully committed to the academic and personal needs of the students. All are aware of the importance of data and its analysis to help them with this process. An extensive professional development program exists which is well focused on providing support for both whole school and individual teacher priorities. For example, there is currently a strong emphasis on developing the skills required by all staff to meet the needs of English language learners. Guidance is also being provided on the use of a new skills analysis assessment package for English language arts to ensure that teachers are able to apply it with confidence and consistency in order to meet the needs of students more closely. Staff fully appreciate the support provided and incorporate new ideas enthusiastically into their planning. The school recognizes, however, that a more systematic evaluation of the impact of professional development on student outcomes is required.

Inter-visitations and well structured team meetings enable staff to share good practice and new approaches. There is an openness which encourages both peer and self evaluation of the effectiveness of instructional techniques. The feedback from formal observations by both the principal and the assistant principals is also valued by the staff and acted upon for the benefit of the students.

All members of the school community are agreed that the principal has been instrumental in moving the school forward in recent years and that she has the capacity to secure further change. The principal and her cabinet, well supported by the general office staff, ensure that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

Links with the many external partners, such as Symphony Space, the Creative Arts Team and the local Beacon Heartshare, are well developed. Their input reflects and reinforces the goals and ambitions of the school.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

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

The principal's long term vision for the school, underpinned by the evaluation of performance data and school climate, has led to the establishment of three new academies to enhance both the academic and personal development of the students. Early indications, especially in the 6th grade academy, are that the restructuring is having a positive impact on both, and the school will be undertaking regular reviews of its success as the year progresses.

The principal and her team use the Comprehensive Education Plan well as an important tool for recording goals and identifying steps to achieve them. The cabinet members, which comprise the assistant principals along with the literacy and mathematics coaches, play a key role in both compiling the targets from the review of performance data and monitoring progress of the impact of actions taken to secure improvement. A summary of the plan is made available to all staff so that everyone is aware of the main priorities and subject targets across the curriculum. There is a shared understanding of what needs to be done and how different teams are tackling priorities within their departments. The good communication between teams enables plans to be modified and amended as a result of interim evaluations. This process occurs regularly at student, class, subject and grade level.

The school understands the need to review the impact of new initiatives on student outcomes systematically and is well placed to continue to do so.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: William McKinley (IS 259)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score			X

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 student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 			X
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			X
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and 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 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.			X
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.			X
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X