



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Dr Susie S McKinney Secondary School of the
Arts**

Junior High School 265

**101 Park Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11205**

Principal: Paula Holmes

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Reviewer: Sandra Tweddell

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

Dr Susan S McKinney School takes students from grades 6 to 12 who wish to follow a general education program that includes a strong focus on the arts. There are currently 650 students enrolled. The school receives Title 1 funding for 100% of its students, which is higher than most schools. Just under 10% of students are special education and 17 students are English language learners. The school population is 78% Black with 18% Hispanic and 4% White and Asian. Attendance is higher than similar schools and schools in the city.

The school is a nationally certified Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) school. This is a program which is designed to prepare students for college eligibility and increase school wide learning and performance.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has very high expectations of students and teachers and she has a clear vision for the school that is supported by strategic action.
- Teachers work effectively in teams to promote the academic and personal development of students.
- Professional development underpins the school's strategic plans for improvement.
- Students enjoy their work and attendance is good.
- Students are very clear about the school's expectation that they will go to, and graduate from, college.
- External expertise and resources are used very well to support the school's goals.
- Regular departmental meetings are fostering a consistency of approach to the use of data to plan for instruction.
- The mandated curriculum is well supported by rubrics developed by teachers that cross disciplines.
- Teachers are held accountable for the performance of their classes and given support to ensure students make the gains expected of them.
- The principal is highly respected by the school community and has a very strong presence around the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to use professional development to ensure all teachers understand how to use information about students to drive instruction.
- Ensure that data is used to differentiate instruction in class.
- Use research about boys' achievement to plan instruction that meets the learning needs of boys.
- Carry out the plans to develop portfolios for each student that record progress and achievements throughout their school careers.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The school has a clear mission shared by students, parents and teachers that each student will not only go to college but will graduate from college. This is what drives the school community. Its success can be seen in higher graduation rates than other schools. The principal is a visionary leader who gives a clear, strategic direction. Teacher turnover has affected the ability to build capacity, but staffing is now more stable and professional development is underpinning the move to create a team of teachers who understand how to use data to inform instruction, particularly differentiated instruction in each classroom. The systems that enable this to happen are good. Students generally enjoy their lessons as they engage them and so attendance is good. Resources to support teaching and learning, particularly in the arts, are good. The school has created a professional dance studio and has good accommodation for drama and music. Teachers and students speak highly of the principal's efforts to secure good resources for them. The school is involved in a number of initiatives to further improve teaching and learning and so has good capacity to improve further.

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 proficient with some well developed features.

The school collects a wide range of data and uses technology effectively to pull it together. The data comes from qualitative and quantitative sources and includes information about attendance, suspensions and mobility of students as well as information about student growth in relation to standards. Commercial schemes are frequently used to map progress. The data is appropriately analyzed at group and individual level and also at class and grade level. In the high school, Regents' information is disaggregated to see where students, who almost gained a pass, failed. The recent analysis showed that students lacked the stamina to complete the test, not the ability to complete it. Professional development has focused upon the analysis of data and teachers are becoming more skilled at using it. The principal has rightly identified that more needs to be done before every teacher is fully confident in the use of data.

Special education students are identified upon enrollment and a wide range of support mechanisms are put into place, including specialist schemes and the support of additional classes after school and on Saturdays. The few English language learners work with specialists and are sometimes placed with students who speak the same language but who are proficient in English. This supports their progress. Diagnostic assessment results in swift involvement of counseling services to support students with personal difficulties, which proved inconclusive. An analysis of data has shown that there is a gap in achievement between boys and girls so 'Project Male' was established to work on the personal development of boys. There has also been some analysis of the performance of

students from different ethnic backgrounds. In class, teaching is not always adjusted to take account of the different ways that some boys learn.

Marking periods are used in the middle school to look at data and high school departments meet every six weeks. The electronic system identifies the performance of different classes and lead teachers in the department or the cabinet follow up any disparities. The effective collection and use of data is starting to raise performance in the middle school. The school compares its performance with how it performed in previous years. It also looks at the performance of similar schools in the locality.

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 proficient.

The principal has worked effectively to focus the faculty on improving instruction and the current phase of work is to use data to improve differentiated instruction in classrooms. The Comprehensive Education Plan is developed by all teachers based on the analysis of data and is a good working document. Each department has their own plan that guides their work.

Departments and teams meet regularly to discuss the data and to set goals at school, class, grade and subject level. The principal has appropriately set two priorities as a context for the goals. These are the quality of instruction and what the school community needs to grow. The overarching goals at school and subject level are rightly based on baseline data. Students most at risk are carefully identified and their progress towards their goals rigorously tracked. They receive support from a wide range of sources such as additional support in or out of class, after school classes and Saturday school.

High expectations are effectively shared with students and their parents or caregivers. There is regular contact through newsletters, the opportunity to come to the monthly parents’ academy and through telephone calls. Parents are invited to discuss their child with teachers but despite all the school’s efforts, many parents do not attend these meetings with teachers. Rubrics on prominent display show students what is expected for each standard, although not all students have internalized these. The school constantly shares successes at whole school meetings and through the honor board that many students read with great interest.

The school is developing well as a strong learning community with a shared goal of improving instruction that underpins all meetings.

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 proficient with some well developed features.

The curriculum is mainly based upon the expectations of the courses and the district, but it is thoughtfully supplemented by themes that cross disciplines and that focus on the arts. The teachers have recently drawn up a rubric for writing that sets minimum standards for

writing in all subjects. The next stage, appropriately, is to share it with students. Department and other meetings focus on the type of instruction needed for the strands and minutes of meetings record some high quality discussion and outcomes.

The principal has very high expectations of the quality of instruction and the performance of classes so teachers are held accountable through the analysis of data at school, departmental, class and individual level. Many of the teachers are at early stages of their careers so are just learning how to interpret data. Departmental leaders regularly meet with teachers to discuss the performance of their classes. Differentiated instruction is a priority. As a result, teachers are now using groups to support the wide range of needs in each class and are starting to extend this by thinking about the strategies needed to differentiate instruction for the gifted and talented and those who are not at proficiency. The school self-evaluation correctly identifies this as an area for further development.

A positive impact of the professional development program, Advancement Via Individual Determination is that it develops consistency towards teaching and learning in all classes. For example, in an English language arts lesson, the effect of the program was clear. It encouraged self-evaluation and engagement by the students as they discussed a text. In a science lesson, the impact was evident in the use of sweets to demonstrate chains of DNA. Here, students, particularly the boys, were excitedly forming DNA chains and talking eagerly about their work.

Excellent budget decisions are made based on the analysis of all the data. Teachers, students and parents all commented that the principal is skilled at securing resources to meet their needs. Creative use of the building has resulted in good accommodation for the arts. Teachers are assigned effectively in the light of the analysis of data, particularly for students in greatest need. They are appointed based on the needs of the school.

Attendance has risen year to year and parents report that their children want to come to school. Any absence is rigorously followed up by the attendance officer and a large team works with families whose children are persistently absent. This culture extends to the security officers who deal firmly with those who arrive late.

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 proficient.

Teachers are selected on the basis of their subject knowledge and more especially, their willingness to become part of the professional learning community of the school. Teachers are interviewed initially by committees of teachers, an example of effective delegation by the principal.

The principal is a highly strategic leader and one result of this is the excellent use that is made of professional development to underpin the school's growth as a learning community. Columbia University Teachers College is used extensively and tutors from Advancement Via Individual Determination have been brought in to school so all teachers understand the principles of effective teaching and learning.

The principal has developed a thoughtful rubric of good practice that is the basis for discussion of lessons following observation by lead teachers and the cabinet, although some leaders use their own specialist rubrics. An excellent strategy is the student/teacher

performance review. All data about a class is collected onto one sheet of paper. Teachers regularly meet with a lead teacher to talk about the performance of their classes and this shapes their subsequent teaching and also identifies professional development needs. This system is helping to build a cohesive faculty with consistent practices that focus on good instruction. Peer observation is also used and often includes a pre-observation discussion. Debriefs, both written and oral, are given.

The principal is highly respected and is an excellent strategic leader. One student commented, "she is there for us," and the others nodded furiously. Parents observed that she cares for her students. The handbook clearly outlines all the school's procedures which supports the effective running of the school. Good links with external resources support the academic and personal development of students. The school is used by the community and its arts events are well attended.

The impact of effective structures to build capacity is seen in the growing sense of team work and collaboration that takes place. Teachers who are recently appointed commented on the large amount of support that they receive.

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 proficient.

The school has set challenging goals for improvement based on the analysis of data. These are regularly reviewed both at department and whole school level. Action is taken when trends are noted, for example, with the implementation of 'Project Boys.' An overarching question that drives the move to improvement is, "What does a McKinney graduate look like?" A teacher observed that as the school changes, the concept of the McKinney student also changes. Cabinet and subject leaders use the Comprehensive Education Plan very well as a working document. Teachers are becoming more skilled in the analysis and use of data to align instruction to the needs of students. The impact of this is seen in a rising trend in performance in the middle school. The school self-evaluation gives an excellent analysis of what the school is doing well and where it needs to improve.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Dr Susan S McKinney Secondary School of the Arts (JHS 265)	∅	✓	+
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	