



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

James McCune Smith School

Community School 200

2589 7 Avenue

**Manhattan
NY 10039**

Principal: Renee Belton

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Reviewer: Jan Lomas

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

James McCune Smith School, Community School 200, serves 804 students from pre-kindergarten to grade 6. It is a Title 1 school.

Rates of attendance have historically been somewhat below those for City and similar schools, but are now rising because of the school's diligent approach to monitoring.

The school is a diverse, multicultural community. The predominant ethnic groups are Black (70.6%) and Hispanic (27.3%). The remaining smaller groups are White (1.7%) and Asian and others (0.9%). The number of students who have recently arrived in the country is rising. These are often from West Africa, Mexico and the Dominican Republic. The stability of the student population is rising but has historically been lower than that for City and similar schools. The number of special education students within the school is 29 (6% of the total) and the number who are English language learners is 132 (28%).

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a visionary leader who is using her determination and positive approach to build a school community where all can thrive and achieve.
- The principal is ably supported by her cabinet who work collaboratively to drive change and development.
- Through careful capacity building, teachers have made clear steps forward in the collection, analysis and use of all types of data about school and student improvement.
- Students are becoming more engaged in their learning and talk with confidence about the opportunities offered to help them in making progress.
- Academic intervention and support services are used flexibly, and with careful attention to specific needs, to ensure effective and responsive planning for each student.
- Teachers take opportunities to work collaboratively, to utilize professional development and to grow as reflective practitioners.
- The rate of attendance is rising because procedures are effective and are consistently applied.
- The school is continuing to work hard to ensure the maintenance of a calm and orderly environment in which to work and learn.
- Creative and exciting opportunities are being offered to students in order to raise self-esteem and develop a sense of achievement.
- The parent coordinator and parent volunteers work well with the school to support students and families and to meet the needs of the whole child.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure all teachers are using analysis of data and ongoing assessment effectively to drive appropriate differentiation which meets students' needs.
- Build on the positive changes in school culture and staff confidence through further well planned opportunities for professional development and involvement in strategic planning.
- Further develop opportunities for students to self-evaluate and make a contribution to goals and plans for their development, so enabling their sense of ownership of their learning.
- Refine the specific detail of strategic planning so that it can be monitored and evaluated more easily.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

In the past two and a half years, under the leadership of the current principal, the school has made good strides towards the establishment of a school culture which is conducive to learning for both students and staff. Teachers feel that the school is now a 'different place'. Much has been done to make the school environment safer and more orderly and to create a supportive climate which enables students and staff to feel secure and to work and learn more effectively. The support services, which provide for the specific needs of students and their families, have been strengthened and there are better relationships with the multicultural community the school serves. The principal knows that the school must continue to work hard to consolidate and build on the improvements made.

There is a clear emphasis on raising standards and addressing the historical picture of low achievement. The principal has a clear and strategic grasp of the use of data to ensure that school development planning is well focused upon priorities. The frequent monitoring and review of all data ensures that teachers are well supported and kept focused upon using information appropriately to plan for each student's progress. The school is well aware of the need to continue to build the capacity of all teachers to translate data analysis into well differentiated instruction. While there remains important work to be done, and the full impact of developments are yet to be seen in students' rates of achievement, the important and positive changes already made augur well for further improvement.

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.

The school uses a sound range of data in order to monitor and evaluate the performance and progress of all students. This includes information from teacher observations and record-keeping. In addition, the results from internal and interim assessments and City and State testing are used alongside data from the Early Childhood Literacy Assessment System, the Grow Report and Princeton Review. The principal and senior colleagues have a good understanding of the use of data to underpin the drive for continuous improvement. Clear expectations have been established which support teachers in gathering and analyzing data appropriately. There are examples of good record keeping and use of assessments by classroom teachers, but some remain in need of further guidance.

The principal and assistant principal carefully analyze data to look at the performance and progress of individual students, grades, classes and content areas during the year and over time. Subgroup data is also analyzed. The school is aware of the importance of combining this with the review of teacher assessments and observation of classroom practice to see if teaching is equally effective for all students. Qualitative data has been used well to identify a group of boys whose lack of engagement concerned the school.

The school's decisive response was to create a class for boys only, with the clear intention of raising self-esteem. The school has already noted early indications of success. The principal has identified and visited other schools and principals whose achievement has demonstrated that they can offer opportunities for sharing strategies. The principal and assistant principal meet with each teacher on a monthly basis to discuss information from ongoing records and assessments, alongside more formal test data. Now that the faculty is more stable and expectations are clear, more teachers are responding to the support provided and they recognize the importance of using data in a meaningful way to improve student achievement.

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 school has established regular collaborative meetings so that teachers can work together to develop plans and strategies which enable student learning. Alongside this, all teachers meet with a member of the administration once a month to ensure individualized support in monitoring progress and identifying what is needed to enable each student to move on. The principal is also aware of a continual need to provide guidance to ensure that some teachers' expectations about the progress and potential of some sub-groups of students are appropriately challenging. There is careful and well-coordinated planning for those students who require academic interventions. This ensures that evaluation of their progress is regular and timely and that the approaches used remain focused and meet specific needs. Where needs are more complex, or further interventions are needed, a personal plan is created and parents and students are involved as appropriate.

The school works very hard to encourage parents to be involved in the life of the school and to participate in the progress of their children through workshops and opportunities to meet with staff. The development of a more open and supportive approach has strengthened the partnership between parents and the school. There is now far greater attendance at parent and teacher evenings and parents feel more comfortable about coming into school. There are monthly parents' evenings for those whose children are receiving academic interventions and interim reports are provided to parents as well as formal report cards. The school is aware that there is a need to continue to build relationships and to maintain the good work done to support families and students who often have complex needs. Teachers are able to say that students are now more focused on learning and the school is working hard to ensure their positive attitudes to school life and expectations. Some students are able to express their appreciation of the support teachers give to them. The school is moving towards enabling all students to have more ownership of their learning. For example, teachers are developing rubrics to help students to self-evaluate and there is more sharing of data about their achievements. The school is now well-placed to develop this kind of valuable work further in order to enable all its young people to take appropriate responsibility for their own learning and progress.

Good progress has been made in establishing an environment which supports learning for all. However, there is still work needed to provide further guidance and professional development so that all staff are able to make a full and effective contribution to whole-school improvement.

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.

The curriculum covers the core areas of mathematics and English language arts which have been mapped to meet the mandated requirements. Additionally, students have the opportunity to study other subjects, including music, art and physical education. The school is planning to strengthen links between English language arts and social studies and science. Programs such as Great Leaps and the recently piloted Accelerated Maths supplement the curriculum to meet specific elements and needs. Enrichment is provided through projects which are linked back to the core areas so that skills and knowledge gained can be identified. Teachers are being effectively supported by the literacy coach to develop rubrics for specific activities. These are enabling evaluation, shared with students, about what they know, understand and can do. Teachers are held to account for the way they plan and deliver instruction to best meet students’ needs. Support and guidance is provided through collaborative meetings, professional development and monthly meetings with the administration. There are still inconsistencies in teachers’ ability to align instruction with data, to differentiate instruction effectively and to provide engaging lessons. The principal is well aware that this is an area for continued development.

Budgeting, staffing and scheduling are managed with the school’s needs and priorities firmly in mind. Staff are assigned carefully to ensure that strengths are used appropriately to address needs as identified through data. Where other issues for improvement emerge, the school responds by adapting plans and interventions and by using budgetary resources in a focused way. This is evidenced by the creation of the boys’ class, as previously mentioned. The school also works hard to respond to students’ personal and social needs and to support the needs of families. For example, international social workers have been identified to work with families who have recently arrived in the country. Another good example is the founding of two groups to raise the self-esteem of older girls and boys. The ‘Elegant Young Ladies’ and the more recent ‘Young Men of Distinction’ groups harness support from outside organizations to provide a range of activities which are valued by students. Teachers comment that the positive changes in the school culture have raised staff morale and, in turn, relationships with students have improved overall. Care for students extends to a clear focus upon monitoring and encouraging regular attendance. Strategies have been effective in raising the overall attendance rate. This has climbed to 95.1%, a figure which is above the City and State averages.

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.

There have been many changes in staffing over the last two and a half years. Newer appointments have been made through a rigorous program of interviews and strategies to ensure that teachers have the appropriate expertise and attitudes to take the school forward. Staffing is now stabilizing although there are plans to make further additions to the cabinet in due course. The more open and supportive environment is enabling the new team to embrace the clear focus upon continual improvement in order to drive up achievement for all student groups. The infrastructure of team meetings now established is valued by teachers, who understand the importance of collaboration to provide mutual

support and enable professional reflection. They recognize the growing spirit of cooperation among colleagues. Professional development is currently organized around the need to strengthen teachers' ability to provide well structured and differentiated lessons, especially in the core areas of literacy and mathematics. Support and development for teachers is provided through, for example, one-to-one meetings with the administration and lunch time and after school sessions. Opportunities are provided to visit other classrooms and schools to observe professional practice. Classroom observation is provided formally, as well as informally and written and verbal feedback is given. Observations are focused towards school priorities and provide regular opportunities for teachers to discuss practice with the principal, assistant principal and the literacy coach.

Partnerships with other organizations and community groups are used very well to support learning. Examples include the Reading and Mathematics Buddy program when Columbia University students work with some grades on the development of basic skills. The school supports all aspects of the child by, for example, housing a medical clinic on site. The principal has been successful in leading the development of a more open and supportive school community. Teachers, students and parents report that relationships throughout the school, and with the parental body, have improved through the hard work done by all. The school continues to work hard to create and maintain a safe, orderly environment in which to work and learn. It is a welcoming place. The principal has a very clear view of the work still to be done to embed new practices and procedures and to further strengthen the confidence and professional expertise of all teachers to enable them to play a full and confident part in whole-school development.

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 Comprehensive Educational Plan is developed by the school leadership team following surveys of staff views. Goals are largely measurable and are agreed through the analysis of data. Although the plan is detailed and is based upon a clear use of soft and hard data, action plans are not always sufficiently clear about the intervals of periodic review, nor who will be specifically accountable for overseeing each goal to check that it is on track. There is clear detail about the major tasks and activities which will be needed in order to achieve success but the specific timing of these is not always apparent. All this means that, while the use of the plan as a strategic tool is proficient overall, it is likely to be less easy to monitor and evaluate progress towards goals. The plan is reviewed at regular intervals and feedback on progress is reported through the school leadership team. In addition, the principal and assistant principal ensure that all data is kept under continual review. Amendments and revisions to plans and strategies are made in a timely fashion in response to emerging needs.

Teachers meet with the administration to discuss planning for individuals and groups in their care. The monthly meetings mean that information is used as effectively as possible and teachers receive guidance and direction tailored to their individual support needs. Professional development opportunities are focused upon building the capacity of teachers to align their instructional practices to the outcomes of formative and summative assessment in an agile and appropriate way.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: James McCune Smith School (PS 200)	∅	✓	+
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	