



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Ronald McNair School

Public School 147

**218 116 Avenue
Queens
NY 11411**

Principal: Anne Cohen

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Reviewer: Margaret Lee

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The school is in transition to a pre-kindergarten through grade 8 school. This year the expansion has included one pre-kindergarten class and a grade 7 class. The total school enrolment is 804. At 12%, in 2005, the proportion of special education students is slightly higher than in other City schools. The largest ethnic group of students is Black, at 92%. A further 5.5% are Hispanic, 1% are White, and 1.5% are Asian and other groups. The proportion of English language learners is low, at 4%. The school receives Title 1 funding. Student attendance was 92% in 2005, which was about the same as the City average. The school has a stable staff.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a committed leader, empowering others to use their professional skills and judgments.
- A good range of assessment information is collected and maintained in accessible ways by staff.
- The links between home and school are well developed and support students with their learning.
- Teachers are engaged and committed in their work.
- Interventions are appropriately targeted through the use of diagnostic testing.
- There is good support from the school's coaches.
- The expansion of the school into pre-kindergarten and grade 7 is being managed well.
- The principal has developed a collaborative school climate, with generous sharing and mutual support.
- The students are calm, focused and attentive in their classroom work.
- The adoption of technology as a teaching and learning device is extending the students' experiences and enhancing their learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Use data to evaluate which strategies are most successful for which students, so as to target interventions more effectively.
- Broaden the range of strategies available to teachers to enable them to overcome the gaps in student learning as identified by diagnostic assessments.
- Ensure that all teachers use data effectively to differentiate instruction.
- Ensure that all teachers use a range of strategies to regularly collect standards-based data on student progress.
- Ensure that data drives the fine-tuning of the curriculum so as to meet the needs of all students more successfully.
- Explore ways of bringing different data sources together so as to track the progress of students more efficiently.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The principal has established effective systems for student data collection, review professional development. She is vigilant about monitoring school improvement and ensuring that teachers are attentive and responsible for improving the levels of student learning. Student data and intervention practices begin early in the school year and regular monitoring occurs. All teachers maintain student portfolios to collate student work and observe growth. These portfolios are continuously used to record student progress. The links to other support services within the school are good but direct targeting to student learning needs are not yet as productive as intended. Classrooms are print-rich, well resourced with support materials and celebrate students' work.

Improved selection processes for staff have been carefully implemented to good effect. Teachers have a good range of experience and professional development is layered to meet their specific need. This is helping to ensure greater consistency of practice. The school demonstrates high levels of cooperation, care and concern for all students. The school community is proud and supportive of the school. There are several positive partnerships working for the benefit of all students and the school is involved with the Columbia Teachers College as a project school.

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 gathers data from a variety of sources. Information from State and City tests is supplemented with interim assessments, such as monthly grade level and unit tests. Authentic assessments of students' work are also carried out. All teachers maintain student portfolios to collate student work and observe growth. The principal has highlighted some inconsistency in practice, however. She has recognized the need to make the routine gathering of standards-based data a more consistent part of the school's culture. A range of diagnostic assessments, including item analysis from tests, is supplemented with information drawn from parent and student surveys, as well as direct observation of practice by the school's administration and coaches. Attendance data is also reviewed. In this way, the school has a secure view of the performance and progress of students that is regularly updated. Good systems are in place in the early childhood classes, where teachers make daily observations and records about children's endeavors. This information is then used carefully to measure progress and to plan the next learning steps for each child.

The data available is analyzed so as to provide an overview of the performance of groups within the school, including English language learners and special education students. The school is aware of differences in the performance of its ethnic groups and is tracking their progress within the school's systems for analyzing the performance of all students.

Comparisons are made between classrooms, and the growth in a student cohort as they progress through the grades is also evaluated. Comparisons are also made with other local schools, as well as the school's own past performance. The principal has a comprehensive folder to record the progress of all students held over from last year, identified as students of particular concern to the school.

The principal has put together comprehensive records of all student progress for the last two years. She has started to use this information to focus her monitoring of instruction and to identify and plan additional interventions to support the students' academic and personal development. At present, however, this process draws from a wide variety of sources, without being integrated into one overall system. This is making the tracking and analysis of student progress less efficient than it should be.

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.

Data analysis is used to formulate teaching plans and contributes to grade level subject learning goals. All grade level learning goals feed into the collaborative development of whole school goals and the Comprehensive Education Plan. The academic intervention team, school leaders and the coaches for mathematics and literacy work together with staff to agree the programs and intervention strategies to support the school's long-term development.

Data is used to identify those students who are most in need of improvement in their performance and to determine the intervention service most appropriate to the individual student. Teachers also use the school's monitoring systems to identify other students who might require additional intervention programs. However, the school has yet to evaluate which strategies are most successful for which students, so as to target interventions more effectively. Students who are targeted for academic intervention support and special education students are given individual interim goals and planned intervention strategies to help them move up to the next level. Parents are involved in contributing to reviews of their children's goals and achievements. Day-to-day assessment is used well throughout the elementary school to set next steps in learning, and individual learning goals are clearly linked to instruction.

High expectations are evident throughout the school, although less pronounced in higher grades. Gaps remain between high expectations, the quality of instructional practice and the resulting outcomes for students. Higher-achieving students are not yet receiving the same well-focused attention as those students most in need of improvement. Consequently, while goals for improving student outcomes do drive all members of the school community, they do not yet do so with sufficient consistency. There are appropriate mechanisms for communicating with parents, so that links between home and school are well developed and support students with their learning. Procedures and expectations are routinely shared, for example, at parent teacher association meetings, parent breakfasts and more informally at other school-wide events.

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 meets the mandated requirements and is systematically being modified to meet students’ needs most effectively. For example, the adoption of technology is extending students’ experiences and enhancing their learning. Teachers are increasingly held accountable for the quality of their instruction and the impact on student outcomes. There is evidence of differentiated instruction and group work in some classrooms, but this is not yet consistent across the school. Teachers use a range of teaching strategies but do not always match these directly to student learning needs to enable them to overcome the gaps in learning as identified by diagnostic assessments. Consequently, although students generally focus well in the activities undertaken, they do not consistently engage in high impact learning.

The budget is allocated according to the learning needs of students, so that each classroom has good range of relevant resources and teaching materials. Teachers are carefully matched to where the principal considers they will be most effective, and scheduling and timings support learning. High standards of behavior are maintained through effective implementation of the school’s policy. The school demonstrates high levels of care and concern for all students. Students feel valued and respected and confirm that there is an adult within the school to whom they would turn, should the need arise.

The school is vigilant about lateness and student attendance levels. Teachers maintain records of the students’ attendance notes and regularly alert students to the need to attend school. There is a concerted drive to improve attendance levels. All teachers display daily attendance levels in classrooms and discuss the issues with students. A colorful graphic data base of the students’ attendance is also displayed outside the principal’s office. This is regularly updated and maintained by students.

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.

The principal has been careful to appoint new staff on the basis of how they will support the school in moving forward. She has built the capacity of the existing staff and works hard to ensure that all work responsibly to the benefit of the students. The principal has gained the respect of the whole school community as a result. She has a very high capacity to effect the changes planned for the school. The community recognizes that this is an improving school.

The principal recognizes that not all teachers have yet been able to embrace consistently the goals and objectives established for the further development of the school. This is being addressed through a continuous program of professional development. The program is based upon whole-school needs, while allowing staff choice to meet their specific development. Teachers are given the opportunity to visit each others’ classrooms with follow-up discussions held in faculty conferences. The school’s coaches have a good eye for the aspects of lessons that could be developed to have even greater impact on

student learning. They provide effective support for teachers in developing their instructional practice. The principal continuously monitors the school, including the effectiveness of learning in each classroom. She knows her staff well as a result. A culture of cooperation has been created through the sharing of information and expertise. This is driven by the high expectations for improving performance. The school runs very smoothly. Expectations and procedures are communicated well, are clear to all, and are generally followed.

The school works in partnership with a number of community-based organizations, including the Police Athletic League, (PAL) and 105th Precinct Youth Explorers Program, which runs the after-school program. This program is effectively integrated with the daily lesson plans of the relevant classroom teachers. The principal is seeking to extend the school's partnerships so that there is even more impact on students' academic and personal growth.

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 a clearly articulated Comprehensive Education Plan, with contributions from teachers and parents. Expectations, goals and objectives within the plan are clear, although not all teachers yet feed the agreed action plans into their own teaching practices with sufficient rigor. There is still more work to do to consolidate the use of data in instruction across the school. This is particularly the case in the transition through to the upper grades and into the middle school. In the lower elementary grades, the alignment of instruction to student data is used constructively to improve student learning and the results are showing this improvement.

The formulation of the school's learning goals stem from the needs identified and are modified following monitoring of student progress. For example, modifications have been made to the assessment practice on guided reading levels. A class of higher performing students has been formed for the first time this year in an attempt to meet this group's needs. Staff teams frequently use available data to review how successful their teaching has been. Teachers' ongoing assessment practices are reviewed regularly by peers and the principal. The principal also reviews progress towards school goals with appropriate groups, including the cabinet and school leadership team.

The principal's routine, daily monitoring of the school and knowledge of what is happening for students provides an ongoing evaluation of the school's improvement. This also enables timely fine-tuning of practice.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Ronald McNair School (PS 147)	∅	✓	+
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	