



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Dr Ronald McNair School

Elementary School 005

**820 Hancock Street
Brooklyn
NY 11233**

Principal: Lena Gates

Dates of review: January 24 - 25, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Tony Boys

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Dr Ronald McNair is an elementary school with 433 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 85% Black, 12% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 90.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 74% eligibility.

Most of the students live in the school's neighborhood zone but a few travel in from further afield, through parental choice. The majority of students enter the school in kindergarten but some start prior to this. The school has many links with outside agencies, including local churches.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for the school's future development and is single-minded in pursuing it.
- The school makes good use of assessments and diagnostic measures to plan improvement strategies.
- Teachers have a very good understanding of students' progress and needs, due to the school's comprehensive systems for gathering meaningful data.
- The school uses data effectively to monitor the success of strategies to improve individual students' progress.
- The principal and administration monitor instruction carefully, giving teachers developmental feedback to improve their performance.
- Good teaching is supported by an effective curriculum that is well designed to allow students' progress to be monitored.
- The school provides a safe, harmonious and stimulating learning environment.
- Systems to ensure good behavior and attendance are very effective.
- Administration has taken immediate and effective action to raise achievement where the need for improvement has been greatest.
- The school provides a wide range of activities that take place outside the school day, which support and enrich the curriculum.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine further the school's systems for comparing its performance over time and against similar schools.
- Ensure that all improvement plans have responsibilities identified, suitable time-scales, and specific success criteria linked to goals.
- Produce a differentiated plan to target professional development where it will have most impact.
- Make full use of interim goals to make it easier to monitor and revise plans.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The school has a vision statement that expresses its overall aim of equipping students for the next stage of education and for life. The principal and administration focus with great determination on achieving this goal. They have introduced major changes to the curriculum and instruction to ensure that teachers collect valid assessment data that allows them to have a very clear understanding of each student's progress and needs. As a result, teachers can monitor individual students' progress very effectively over time and adjust instruction to respond to changing circumstances. The school's effective systems for monitoring instruction reinforce this process. The principal and administration regularly carry out formal and informal classroom observations, giving developmental feedback to help teachers improve instruction. Through using these systems to monitor instruction and progress, administration has identified students and subjects that need most improvement and has taken immediate action to raise achievement. The positive impact of this is seen in current assessment data, which shows that students are making good progress after a dip in performance due to a number of unusual factors that affected last year's results. Although, the systems are not as refined with regard to the school's review of its overall performance over time and in comparison to similar schools.

Students have access to a broad and relevant curriculum that is enriched by a wide range of activities taking place outside the school day. Learning is also supported by very effective systems to ensure good behavior and attendance. As a result of this curriculum and focus on encouraging positive attitudes, the school provides a safe, harmonious and stimulating learning environment.

The school also makes very good use of assessment data and diagnostic measures in framing improvement plans. These focus on raising achievement for individual students but they do not all have clear time-scales, specific success criteria and identified responsibilities. The school has not yet fully developed the use of interim goals to make it easier to monitor the effectiveness of plans and to make revisions. Teachers have very good access to professional development to support them in delivering strategic plans. The school has not yet produced a differentiated professional development plan to target this training on areas where it will have most impact. A data inquiry team meets regularly to review student progress and has identified its focus group.

The school has taken comprehensive action to tackle issues raised in the previous Quality Review by improving the use of data, extending differentiation and monitoring instruction more effectively. The positive impact of these measures can be observed in the school's current practice.

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

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

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

The school has introduced an effective system of regular school-wide assessments based on standardized test items. Teachers supplement these with their own assessments and "do-now" tasks that are administered by school aides. Each teacher maintains an assessment binder containing all relevant data on the progress of each student in the class, including reading logs and conference notes. Skills assessments give further information, which students keep themselves. Teachers use the same systems to assess special education students and English language learners, with additional assessments appropriate to these groups. Administration summarizes all this data and displays it on charts that are accessible to all in the school's data room. As a result of this wide-ranging data collection, teachers have a very good understanding of the achievement of each individual student. Effective training has enhanced this understanding.

The school also compares very well the performance of different ethnic and gender groups. This has allowed administration to identify a need to support the progress of Black boys by providing a special program, "Rites of Passage", which enhances their academic, social and emotional education. The program operates on a pullout model and also on Saturdays. This has been successful in promoting more effective learning for these students. The school also analyzes its own past performance and makes some comparisons with similar schools but these systems are less developed and do not yet give as much useful information on student progress to inform planning.

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

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

Teachers work very well together to consider assessment data when analyzing student progress. The principal and staff meet together at grade conferences and faculty meetings and on professional development days to discuss goals for improvement. As a result, the school sets very relevant individual student goals for English language arts and math. The school has not yet translated these into overall action plans with specific time-scales, success criteria and staff responsibilities.

The school has very effective systems for identifying individuals and groups of students where action is needed to improve their performance, as for example in the innovative program to enhance learning and achievement for Black boys. This is beginning to raise the self-esteem and achievement of these students. The inquiry team and academic intervention services focus well on students most in need of improvement and allocate support accordingly. The school shares its goals effectively with parents, teachers and students and conveys high expectations to the school community. The parent coordinator plays an important role in this process, facilitating workshops, parents'

meetings and keeping constant contact with parents through other formal and informal means. The school has a very useful and informative parents' handbook that reinforces its high expectations and gives good advice about how parents can support their children's education. Parents also have many opportunities to provide the school with information, through surveys, parent-teacher conferences and informal contact with teachers. Parents value the work of the coordinator and speak highly of the school's "open-door" policy with regard to communication. The school's very good links with parents have a very positive impact on students' progress and attendance.

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

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

The school has chosen programs for English language arts and math that include full assessment schemes. Together with teacher assessments, these programs give teachers good access to meaningful student progress data on which to build effective improvement strategies. The curriculum is rich and varied, giving students the opportunity to experience science, technology, music, art, physical education and social studies as well as English language arts and math. Students also have access to a wide range of activities that take place outside the school day, including arts, music, sports, journalism club, entrepreneurs club and academic programs such as "Super Saturday" and peer mentoring. These activities considerably enrich learning and progress.

Administration has very effective systems for monitoring instruction and giving teachers developmental feedback. Classroom observation and scrutiny of planning and assessment records are used to ensure that instruction engages students and meets their individual needs. Relationships between teachers and students are very positive. As one student put it, "No matter what your problem, this school makes you feel comfortable." This, together with the effective measures taken to improve attendance, results in good teaching and learning that promotes student progress well. The impact of this is beginning to be seen in improved achievement in all grades.

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

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

Teachers have good access to professional development from within the school and from outside. Administration carries out classroom observations formally and informally, giving written feedback in all cases. Teachers find this very helpful in developing good practice. The cabinet identifies professional development needs through this process and also by considering student progress data. This has resulted in the availability of a wide range of good training and development opportunities but as yet the school does not have a differentiated plan to target professional development where it will have most impact.

Teachers have many opportunities for professional dialogue and to see others teach, through intervisitation and through discussion at grade conferences. This helps them to improve instruction and to plan courses that meet students' needs very well. The school supports new and inexperienced teachers well. All new teachers have a mentor and access to additional professional development through lunchtime sessions. This helps them to settle in quickly and to get used to the school's systems and expectations. Clear procedures for dealing with behavior issues help the school to run smoothly and promote students' learning. As a result of these systems teachers feel that the school supports them well, providing a safe and secure learning environment.

The school has established partnerships with many outside agencies that support and enrich learning. These include partnerships with church and community based organizations that enhance the students' academic, emotional and social education.

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal has established a clear vision for the school's future direction and has communicated it to the whole school community. A major aim of the school is to equip students with the skills they will need for the next stage of education and for life. Parents whose children have graduated from the school affirm that they have been well prepared to continue their education and to enter adult life. "This school did a great job for my kids" was one opinion that represents parents' satisfaction with the school.

The school's planning systems identify major strategic goals and break these down into objectives with success criteria and specific time-scales. This gives a structure to strategic planning that ensures that major changes and developments are properly thought through. Although the systems do not make use of interim goals to make it easier to monitor the progress and effectiveness of improvement strategies and to drive forward the next stage of development.

The principal and administration use data and diagnostic tools well to revise plans in order to reach the school's improvement goals. This is illustrated well by the prompt action taken to improve student achievement, following a recent dip that was due to unusual and unforeseen circumstances. The changes to staffing and curriculum organization have been effective in bringing about improvements to progress that are now evident in the school's assessment data. This prompt strategic action to improve learning was based on an effective analysis of student data, followed by decisive action to bring about change.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Dr Ronald McNair School	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped