



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Dr. Susan S. McKinney Secondary School of the  
Arts**

**Middle - High School 265  
101 Park Ave  
Brooklyn  
NY 11205**

**Principal: Paula Holmes**

**Dates of review: January 7 - 9, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Shehz Ali**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Dr. Susan S. McKinney Secondary School is a junior high school with 603 students from grade six through grade twelve. The school population comprises 79% Black, 17% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 40% special education students. Boys account for 42% of the students enrolled and girls account for 58%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 88.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 64.6% eligibility.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is a strong leader who ensures the positive direction of the school.
- Good relationships between staff and students have led to a culture of high expectations in classrooms.
- The dynamic arts program contributes well to the social and academic educational growth of students.
- Multiple partnerships outside and within the school provide quality, multi-faceted services for students.
- Innovative programs for students in grades 6 and 9 help to ease their transition into the next stage of schooling.
- Teachers are held accountable for the quality of their teaching with regular observation, collaboration and supervision.
- Professional development supports school goals and is based on determined need.
- Mutual respect between staff and students has led to student eagerness to learn and succeed.

### What the school needs to improve

- Analyze data to determine and monitor trends in performance and progress of a wider range of subgroups throughout the school.
- Ensure staff use data to set demanding, measurable goals for each student.
- Ensure teachers plan for and implement differentiated instruction regularly.
- Establish formalized, time-sensitive planning with interim benchmarks to enable plans to be re-visited and revised.
- Measure the impact of school-wide decision making on student achievement and progress.
- Broaden the scope of comparisons with similar schools to identify and improve best practices.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### Progress made since the last review

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

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

Dr. Susan S. McKinney Secondary School for the Arts is a well-run school that supports a strong academic focus with a dynamic, intense arts program. The strong arts program effectively supports the school goal of fostering growth socially and academically. McKinney staff know their students well and relationships among students and staff are strong, warm and nurturing. As a result, McKinney students are well-behaved, focused individuals who are determined to succeed in college and beyond.

The school collects and maintains data well. However, it does not analyze the available data in sufficient depth. Plans do not have time-sensitive benchmarks or end points to measure success. The school is therefore unable to adequately measure the impact of strategic decisions on student achievement or to support more fully teachers' planning of differentiated instruction. McKinney has numerous partnerships that service students socially, academically and emotionally. Partnerships with galleries, performing arts centers and media organizations provide extra, relevant avenues for students to grow and succeed.

The school is still in the process of addressing areas for improvement from the last review. The school has responded well to addressing academic and social issues with boys with the implementation of single sex classes. Actions to ensure differentiated instruction and the better use of data are still developing and have yet to be effectively implemented. Although staff maintain a focus on these issues, the results and impact of that focus remain unexplored. The inquiry team is still in the process of determining its role. Although there are valuable discussions regarding school-wide practice, these have concentrated on specific groups of students and have not yet had an impact on the school's work as a whole.

### 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 proficient.**

McKinney collects data primarily through five databases. These enable staff to collect student grades and progress over time, compare performance between subjects and classes and maintain an up-to-date database from periodic tests. The school does not make the best use of these systems to make a close enough analysis of student

achievement and progress. The school uses the data well to compare the achievement of different grades, and of special education students and English language learners. While it has made some observations of performance by boys and girls, and different ethnic groups, the school does not use data to analyze formally more subtle differences. The school makes limited formal comparisons of its performance with similar schools. However, the school does focus well on grade 6 and grade 9 students in these entry-level grades (to middle and high school respectively) through its successful summer preparation program, where the students prepare socially and academically for expectations and norms of school in September. Administration specifically monitors data in these two grades, resulting in a sustained improvement in their behavior and attitudes while at McKinney.

Special education students progress well and achieve better than most other students. The school effectively services special education students in a self-contained class, subtly enough to support the school goal of minimizing labeling of students. English language learners are fully integrated and receive Read 180 as their primary service. Data shows that, as a result of the effective implementation of this program, English language learners are also out-performing many other students. The school recognizes the need to include additional, successful, intervention strategies in general education classes to ensure these students make equally as much progress.

**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 proficient.**

The school’s successful interventions for individual students in greatest need of improvement are resulting in increased student achievement. Students are placed on individualized, alternate schedules to cater to their specific needs. The school created a twelfth-grade study packet for a growing number of seniors who were in danger of missing goals for their graduation. This strategy successfully refocused students on the primary skills and knowledge needed for courses.

School-wide plans for targeted groups sufficiently ensure identified subgroups receive particular attention and additional support. The observation that young, African American males were struggling both socially and academically resulted in McKinney Prep summer program for grade 6 and 9 and single sex classes in grade 6, created to eliminate gender-specific social issues. The school has this year instituted Project Male and Project Sisterhood in response to the need for gender-specific social support and instruction. Grade 9 classes provide rigor and added focus for students as they enter high school. The focus on entry grades has resulted in better work habits and a sustained positive culture. However, these plans do not have interim goals or success criteria which would enable the school to determine their success. Systemic, structural changes to fulfill the school’s vision to increase differentiated instruction and improve scheduling are still in the various stages of implementation. While stakeholders perceive the school as being more successful, the school has not been able to provide concrete evidence of the impact of its plans on overall student achievement. The school sets high expectations for all students. This results in motivated, focused, hard-working students who are very busy, excited and engaged in their learning. Students are ambitious to attend college and seek to learn more about their future. Teachers feed

back to students in detail to help them improve their future work. High expectations are also evident in the increase in advanced placement courses offered in the school. Parents are pleased with the level of communication with the school. The principal and teachers are accessible and in regular contact with parents.

**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 proficient.**

The curriculum is broad and engaging. Students are visibly engrossed in their work and are eager to participate and demonstrate knowledge. McKinney’s arts program is broad and supports the school’s goal of fostering growth in the social and academic learning of all students. The school has successfully and remarkably ensured funding in creative ways to maintain a high quality arts curriculum while still providing students with a solid academic program. The ‘No Pass, No Play’ policy ensures that students prioritize academics, but rightfully do not miss the arts. Arts teachers provide homework help and tutoring to students during practice time, while still maintaining high expectations in that specific arts class. The extended day program also ensures students have time for remediation and arts practice. This decision to maintain focus on the arts ensures a balanced and well-rounded education for the students. Although broad and engaging, instruction is not sufficiently differentiated. Despite the focus of the professional development on increasing differentiated instruction, this was not evident in classroom visits during the review.

The administration successfully holds teachers accountable for their students’ progress in various ways. Weekly department meetings ensure departments work consistently on programming and initiatives. The math department discusses recent assessment results and discusses problems of the day to re-focus students on areas of weakness. . Regular meetings to evaluate teacher-made tests ensure that teachers’ bi-monthly assessments have appropriate pacing and sequencing.

Positive relationships among staff and students foster effective collaboration and inspire students to succeed and “become like the teachers”. Everyone is eager to celebrate success. For example, when a senior student received an admission letter from the college of his choice, work in the principal’s office stopped as the staff honored the student’s achievement. The school has very effective programs for students in grades 6 and 9 to help to ease their transition into the next stage of schooling.

**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 proficient.**

The school uses professional development as an underlying support for its goals and plans. Teachers attend sessions regularly and often. The principal assesses what professional development is needed using the results of a staff survey and responds rapidly to staff requests. When the survey indicated that some grade teachers knew little of other grade standards and that math teachers knew little about same grade English

language arts standards, she ensured that collaborative cross-content grade levels meetings were added to the scheduled department and subject meetings. As a result, social science classes align their instruction with literacy work in English language arts. Constant collaboration and intervisitation ensures all teachers have the opportunity to see best practice and become involved in discussion regarding school practice. Much of the current focus on professional development is on the use of data and on differentiated instruction although the training has not had sufficient impact on instruction and on goal setting. New teachers benefit from peer mentors, rather than supervisory mentors, to increase collaboration and communication and reduce stress for new staff. The principal, along with teacher leaders, observes teachers regularly and often and feeds back immediately. Partnerships with outside agencies provide additional curricular support which adds to the students' well-rounded educational experience. Partnerships provide students and families support, counseling and instruction in social skills, resources for the McKinney magazine, math and science support and coaching in fencing. The school's partnerships with various arts organizations allow for a rich arts experience for the students. Partnerships with performing and visual arts organizations provide incentive and motivation for students to pursue an arts-based curriculum alongside their academic 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 underdeveloped with proficient features.**

Under the principal's strong leadership, the school provides a sound education for students. Her seats on college boards and other educational associations provide insights and information as to the trends in education. The principal has moved the school in a positive direction and empowered the staff and students to articulate their personal goals and their ideas for a school vision. This is an ongoing project for the 2007-2008 school year.

The principal keeps a watchful eye on the progress of individual students and the effectiveness of teachers. Goals for teachers are established with the principal early on in the year and are revisited periodically throughout the year. The school monitors the progress of special education students and English language learners effectively through its team structure. However, the school does not analyze data in sufficient depth to enable it to judge the full success of its initiatives through an analysis of the achievement and progress of all student groupings. Formal test data and bi-monthly teacher tests provide some information, but the lack of deeper analysis leaves an effective resource underutilized.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

**SCHOOL NAME: Dr. Susan S. McKinney Secondary School of the Arts**

**Quality Score**

**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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			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			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X		

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			<b>X</b>		

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			<b>X</b>		

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>