



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The William McKinley School

Elementary School 063

**121 East 3 Street
New York
NY 10009**

Principal: Darlene Despeignes

Dates of review: June 4 - 6 2008

Lead Reviewer: Daniella Phillips

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The William McKinley School is an elementary school with 200 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 19% Black, 66% Hispanic, 6% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 90.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 64% eligibility.

The principal was appointed in August 2007 and is completing her first year as school leader. The school continues to experience declining student enrolment due to demographic changes within the local area. It shares the building with another elementary school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The new principal's good strategic planning has focused the school community on instructional and programmatic next steps.
- Teachers strive to know students well and they plan workshop model lessons that maximize opportunities for conferencing.
- The school has strengthened its practice of gathering, analyzing, and using data to understand individual student achievement.
- The very positive school culture of high expectations and respect between teachers and students supports effective learning and instruction.
- Teachers meet together and with administration to discuss instruction, assessment results, and student reading goals.
- Parents appreciate the intimate school setting and varied partnerships that support children's developmental needs.
- The administration provides ongoing support for all teachers to grow professionally and holds staff accountable for teaching and learning.
- Small classes, training in numerous interventions and an effective pupil personnel team provide good support for students in greatest need.
- The school operates on the premise of shared and distributive leadership where collaboration and student success are deeply valued.

What the school needs to improve

- Carefully track the progress of specific groups of students, including ethnic, racial and gender groups, to interpret trends and patterns accurately.
- Ensure that the whole school community is fully aware of the prioritized goals for improvements to student outcomes.
- Consistently set goals across all content areas, with measurable targets for student progress, and regularly communicate these goals to parents.
- Ensure that social studies and science receive suitable time, attention, and planning across all grade levels in order to engage all student learners.

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.

The William McKinley School is making a concerted effort to raise achievement and develop a positive school culture. Teachers know students well both because of small class and school size, and also because they invest in building relationships with families. Using collaborative approaches, the new principal relies heavily on and nurtures teacher, parent and student involvement in school decision making. As a result, greater distributive leadership is in place. School committees are robust and there are clear expectations for collegial sharing of best practices. The inquiry team is a good example of teacher-led professional development. They have studied, and modelled for colleagues, effective strategies for teaching vocabulary to improve students' reading comprehension. While literacy instruction is consistently good, there remains work to be done in the other content areas to promote broader student engagement.

The new principal, staff, and active parent leaders share a clear vision and a good understanding, based on school data, of the next steps for school development. Important work has already occurred to ensure that the school's learning environment is safe, positive, and caring for children and families. The school also has raised the bar of expected student achievement with a solid commitment to knowing well student performance and progress data. However, goals for raising student achievement are not yet sufficiently measurable or set within time frames to monitor and revise plans.

The school has successfully addressed some of the areas of improvement from the last review. Teachers engage actively in analyzing student data and sharing information and records across grade levels. In addition, they participate in school decision making, including early planning for the Comprehensive Education Plan, through dynamic committees. However, the school still does not disaggregate adequately student data by ethnic, racial and gender group, nor are student goals as defined or precise as had been recommended.

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.

The school has strengthened its practice of gathering, analyzing, and using data to understand individual, grade and whole school student achievement. This has resulted from very good professional development work by the administration and coaches.

Specifically, the school has trained teachers in improving the quality and consistency of running records, conferring, math checklists, parallel teaching, differentiation, and data analysis from periodic assessments. Teachers record and review student data in similar ways across classrooms, which assists in sharing data between grades. School administration looks critically at each grade level to compare progress with prior years and to compare performance with similar schools.

Special education students and English language learners together comprise nearly 30% of all students, and the school tracks their academic progress in order to plan interventions and supports. With the very recent release of State English language arts test scores, the principal happily reported that all but one special education student increased in scale scores. There is good oversight of the learning needs and performance results for both special education students and English language learners.

The school does not systematically identify student progress and achievement by different groups, including ethnic, racial and gender groups. Several staff noted informally, for example, that boys tend to struggle more with reading and writing, but there is no analysis of student data to test that assertion and then act on it. As a result, the school misses out on opportunities to observe and address patterns of student underachievement.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

A priority of the new principal has been to involve and empower members of the school community in school improvement and decision-making. Committees that had been defunct now meet effectively and set goals and action plans for attendance, behavior management, school leadership, and academic interventions. Teachers and parents express overwhelmingly a sense that the new principal invites their genuine input in school matters, especially in raising expectations for student achievement.

The consistency of the setting of goals is a mixed story. The Comprehensive Education Plan does not offer much meaningful guidance, as it has not been updated since April 2005, and a generic 3% increase in student performance applies across all subject areas. Whole school goals are sometimes vague, with notable exceptions in the cases of the well-articulated 92% attendance goal and a focused plan for improving students’ writing stamina, volume and detail. At the grade and student level, clear instructional targets are set, mainly in reading and writing. Teachers routinely meet together and with administration to discuss instruction and assessment results. They confer regularly with students and every student has an individualized reading plan with specific goals and benchmarks. There is less of an objective profile of student learning or plan for next steps in the areas of math, science and social studies than in literacy. Recently, the school has introduced an academic newsletter with curricular updates from every teacher. This well-received publication offers parents important information about class learning. However, the school lacks a uniform written communication to parents about each child’s specific progress beyond the standardized quarterly report cards.

The pupil personnel team and intervention providers are highly knowledgeable about students and their work is well integrated. The team meets twice each month to focus attention on and support struggling students. The documentation and action plans developed for every referred student are comprehensive and effective. Moreover, small classes allow the well-trained intervention providers to push-in for student services.

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 school implements the core curriculum and instruction is organized effectively through the workshop model. Data from interim math and English language arts assessments provide staff with meaningful measures of students’ progress. Teachers follow the Teachers College approach to reading and writing with good support from a staff developer and coach. While the literacy instruction across classes and grades is strong, the instruction and oversight of other content areas has pockets of excellence and areas of inconsistency. Social studies and science projects are evident in displayed student work and field trips, but they are not woven fully into curricular units; instead, a science cluster teacher meets twice weekly with every class. Teachers use a civics/history program as an instructional resource. These subjects offer critical connections and relevance to student learning and require more time, attention, and planning across all grade levels. Students enjoy good opportunities in art, music and physical education both during and after the school day.

This is a small school and the administration and teachers have created a “family” environment where students are very well known to all staff. This ensures a very positive school culture of expectation and respect between teachers and students. Compassionate and enthusiastic teachers strive to engage all students with lessons that maximize opportunities for basic differentiation, such as conferencing. In better practice, seen most frequently in collaborative team teaching classes, teachers differentiate entire lessons with targeted assignments and coaching. Good procedures for motivating and monitoring student attendance exist. As a result, overall student attendance has increased .4% since last year.

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 operates on the premise of shared and distributive leadership where collaboration and student success are deeply valued. The administration provides ongoing support for all teachers to grow professionally and holds staff accountable for teaching and learning. Teachers meet individually with the principal at least twice during the year to develop professional goals. With frequent formal and informal classroom observations, teachers find the discussions that follow constructive in helping them improve the quality of their instruction. Several teachers commented that the new principal treats staff as “professionals” and this fosters trust and confidence within the

school. New teachers feel well supported by the overall collegiality of the staff and by mentors. Some teachers inter-visit with colleagues and outside of school, but this is not formalized to ensure everyone's participation.

Professional development focuses on improving teachers' use of data for instructional planning. The administration currently employs a well-regarded science coach and network math specialist. These part-time positions do not provide sufficient support for these two major content areas. Therefore, the school is taking steps to develop internal teacher leadership to assume greater responsibility for enhancing teaching practices in math and science.

Parents appreciate the intimate school setting and varied strategic partnerships that support children's developmental needs. Recent initiatives include a student-run "Book Store" that greets students as they enter the school building, a recess enhancement program through Asphalt Green and New York Road Runners Club to promote students as "recess leaders," and a free swimming program for all grade 2 students through the YMCA. Many adult volunteers serve as tutors and assistants through Learning Leaders and NYU America Reads which increases the support for struggling learners.

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 new principal's very good strategic planning and reflection have focused the school community on instructional and programmatic next steps. There is awareness and agreement among staff and parents about problems, such as declining student enrolment, and potential solutions, such as increased recruitment and communication tools. The school community exudes pride and enthusiasm in their collaboration and people talk openly of the school's bright future.

Teachers have good processes for gathering data in order to guide planning and goal setting for improving student performance. For example, teachers have noted that kindergarten students are not familiar with many sight words, so they have developed daily writing exercises and brief assessments to improve this important early writing stage. Furthermore, the school uses wisely a good range of diagnostic tools to monitor interventions. For instance, the speech teacher pushes in to first grade classes to identify and work with students using the phonics phone diagnostic tool before any need for referral arises.

However, the practice of setting, tracking and revising measurable goals for student achievement is not fully embedded at the school. Teachers consistently look for instructional improvements, but they do not always set precise interim targets. Now the school leadership is looking at ways in which realistic timeframes can be instituted for measuring the success of plans at regular intervals, such as six-week cycles.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The William McKinley 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