



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

James McCune Smith School

Elementary School 200

**2589 7 Avenue
New York
NY 10039**

Principal: Renee Belton

Dates of review: January 22 - 23, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Jo Storrs

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

James McCune Smith is an elementary school with 688 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 6. The school population comprises 67% Black, 31% Hispanic, 1.7% White and less than 1% American Indian and Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 9% special education students. The boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 91.8%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 75% eligibility.

The school has a dual language program in Spanish and English. Nearly a quarter of the school's population is transient students, some of whom travel some distance to school. The school's mission is built on the premise of being a community 'where the search for knowledge begins and never ends'.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's vision, passion and motivation permeate the school and empower staff to be creative.
- The vibrant learning environment celebrates students' achievement and progress, and sets a tone of high expectations.
- Compassionate school leaders and staff use data rigorously to gain an intimate knowledge of every student and set appropriate targets.
- High levels of collaboration between leaders and staff successfully improve instruction, planning and intervention to accelerate student progress and achievement.
- The many talented teachers and staff work in close harmony to try new methods and approaches to improve student learning.
- The mutual trust and respect between students and staff support students' personal and academic development.
- The principal manages the budget and scheduling imaginatively to motivate students and raise achievement.
- The proportion of high-quality instruction and interesting curriculum inspires and engages students.
- Firmly-established procedures ensure that the school operates smoothly and efficiently in a calm atmosphere and parents see this as a significant strength.
- Thorough monitoring procedures enable the school to focus on improvements and effectiveness.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop differentiation of planning and instruction to meet the needs of all students and accelerate learning in all subjects.
- Continue to align professional development to the needs of individual staff and maintain time for staff to share and develop best practices.
- Persist with strategies to involve more parents in their children's education.

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 principal is passionate about the school and students. Her vision and high expectations underpin her excellent leadership. The assistant principal enthusiastically analyzes data enabling him and the principal to gain a clear picture of every student and to set appropriate targets. They work in close collaboration with teachers and staff successfully improving instruction, planning and intervention to accelerate student progress and achievement. The vibrant learning environment celebrates students' work and progress and establishes a tone of high expectations. The school functions smoothly and efficiently and provides a calm learning environment where staff and students work in an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding. Students benefit from a lively dual language program which effectively improves their competency in English and Spanish. They experience a rich, varied and challenging curriculum, which includes an impressive range of out-of-school activities. In spite of the school's best efforts, not all parents actively support their children's learning.

Compassionate school leaders and the many talented teaching and intervention staff nurture the academic and personal development of all students. They know students very well and devise schedules focused on meeting their particular needs. Teachers value the trust of the principal and feel empowered to be innovative in planning their instruction to improve learning. As a consequence, most instruction inspires and engages students and effectively supports those with learning difficulties, while challenging the high achievers. However, the school recognizes the need to differentiate professional development for the individual requirements of all staff and maintain time for staff to share and develop the best practices to improve instruction and differentiation to meet the needs of all students. Thorough monitoring procedures, closely linked to planning and goal-setting, enable this successful school to focus on further improvements and effectiveness.

The school rigorously addressed the recommendations of the last review. All staff use and analyze data meticulously to differentiate planning and instruction in English language arts and mathematics. Professional development and involvement in strategic planning has raised staff confidence and strategic planning is systematically monitored and evaluated. Students are fully involved in developing their own goals and evaluating their progress. The school's inquiry team meets twice a week. It plays a significant role by evaluating a range of data of the focus group to identify successful strategies to improve programs and student achievement.

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 assistant principal lives and breathes data and his excellent charts inform staff and students of their achievements and targets. Together with the principal, he collates a wealth of valuable data to understand the performance and progress of every single student. Data is rigorously analyzed from external and internal tests and assessments, homework and conferencing notes along with relevant records of students' attendance, attitudes and behavior. The outcomes offer administration, teachers and staff an accurate picture of each student's achievement and needs. It also pinpoints any gender or ethnic differences and the specific needs of special education students and English language learners. For instance, an important school priority has been to establish an exceptional dual language program which is engaging and motivating Spanish-speaking students to become English proficient as soon as possible. It is highly praised by parents and also benefits those English-speaking students involved in the program as they learn a second language at an early age. Comparisons ensure all groups of students, classes and grades make positive annual improvements and the school is performing favorably within its group of similar schools. Pertinent reports, health records and parental information identify each student's specific requirements upon enrolment to the school. In addition, each grade assesses every student and consults relevant records from the previous teacher to place students in the most suitable class with the teachers and resources to meet their needs. One of the school's priorities has been to provide small class numbers. This enables individual students to be closely tracked and their progress analyzed by teachers and intervention staff. It also allows for more specific support to be provided for those students with specific language or learning difficulties. Constant assessment throughout the school provides information to ensure programs and class instruction continue to meet students' developmental requirements or for adjustments to be made, if necessary. This successful process continues throughout the school based upon precise and constant assessment providing specific support for those students with learning difficulties.

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.

Administration and staff work cohesively to improve student achievement. All relevant student data, and valuable formal and informal meetings to discuss each student, provide them with an intimate knowledge of every student. This enables them to set challenging goals and plan work which effectively meets the students' needs. Individual student achievement is at the heart of goal-setting procedures, with different groups being the focus according to identified need. For example, the school's inquiry team of four members led by the assistant principal, meets twice a week and plays a substantial role in goal setting and planning. The focus group is students in the lowest 15% plus some hold-over students not making sufficient progress. Accurate identification of their problems and closely aligned interventions is actively informing and modifying class instruction and improvements in student achievement are already being noticed. The range of collaborative approaches successfully sets challenging goals and provides common planning time for teachers.

A significant strength of the school is the principal's insistence upon high standards. This drives the whole community to create and actively support goals to improve the performance of students. These consistently high expectations are visible in the vibrant learning environment that celebrates students' work and promotes a tone of high expectations. It is evident in all aspects of school life and considerably enhances the students' learning and achievement. The compassionate leaders and school's open-door policy encourages parents to provide or receive information about their children's

education. Meetings and workshops supply additional occasions to strengthen links between school and home and to promote the school's goals. Many parents take advantage of these opportunities. They value the relationship and find the school welcoming, sympathetic and supportive of them and their children. However, due to long working hours, many parents find it difficult to maintain close contact with the school.

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.

Alongside the mandated curriculum, the school provides extra support before, during and after the school day. Profitable links between science, social studies, English language arts, math and the arts integrates learning and motivates students to achieve. Students value the trips the school organizes and the grade celebrations at the end of a project to show their parents how well they have performed. The curriculum is further successfully enriched for all students through exciting arts and sports programs and after-school clubs. For example, students make quilted gifts for the local elderly. The talented and dedicated teachers and staff recognize their accountability to the students and help to create new and valuable programs to continually raise achievement. They know they are trusted and supported by the principal and many make instruction challenging and interesting in a calm and productive learning environment. This inspires and engages students and has created an environment of mutual trust and respect. As a result, most students behave well and work hard to do their very best.

The principal provides excellent resources and makes useful staffing and scheduling decisions that support these programs. This results in time being used efficiently, with differentiated programs playing an important role in the school's success. Extremely effective support and differentiation in some classrooms caters very well for students with learning needs. The school recognizes the importance of spreading this practice to consistently meet the needs of all students and to accelerate learning in all subjects. Students know their targets and plans for improvement which is helping them to move into the next level. Students and parents are proud to uphold the school's high expectations. Students enjoy school and learning which encourages high attendance and contributes significantly to the school's achievements.

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.

The principal's passion and motivation permeate the school and have earned her the respect of the whole school community. As one teacher said, "She is very approachable and friendly. The kids love her, but she can be stern. She handles her authority with grace." Parents appreciate the firmly-established and effective procedures that ensure the school operates smoothly. Minor problems are thoroughly investigated and swiftly addressed so as not to disrupt learning. Through observations and daily walkthroughs administration are continually updated about the quality of instruction and students' progress, which informs professional development decisions. There is a wide-range of professional development activities designed to meet school and personal needs and teachers and staff value the time to visit other classrooms. Many teachers use these opportunities successfully to improve their instruction, planning and interventions to benefit

student progress and standards. However, the school recognizes the need to differentiate professional development for the individual requirements of all staff and maintain time for staff to share and develop the best practices to improve instruction. Newly appointed teachers appreciate the support of the principal, and find their mentors and buddies invaluable.

The team of specialist intervention staff works in close harmony with teachers to constantly enhance students' academic and personal development. They have a clear knowledge of each student built up over a number of years, so unusual patterns and concerns are soon noticed and quickly resolved and do not hinder students' progress. The school has developed a good range of beneficial links with outside agencies to enhance the school's arts program. For instance, the relationship with Carnegie Hall enables some students to learn the flute and perform on the stage with an orchestra and links with Harlem Hospital provide medical assistance, counseling and other support for students and their families. All these links broaden and enrich students' overall development.

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 well developed.

Administration is fully committed to monitoring and reviewing the school's performance and takes immediate action when necessary. It has designed thorough and effective systems to gain a detailed knowledge of each student. Systems involve data analysis, class observation, assessments and conferences with the student and notes of each student's patterns of attendance, behavior and attitude. Armed with this information, they carefully ensure all programs and activities within and out of school are appropriate and successful. Planning and goal setting are closely linked to this rigorous monitoring procedure and enables the school to measure its success and adjust programs when required. School goals are led by data and student achievements and are regularly evaluated against aspirations using periodic and interim assessments. The principal has high expectations, but is also nurturing and caring. She is always available to parents, students and staff and helps teachers and staff to be effective and play their part in monitoring performance. The loyal and highly-motivated teachers know their personal accountability and realize that classroom observations and walkthroughs by administration help them to become more effective. Teachers use this and all other information they gain from staff and other teachers to evaluate the success of their instruction and to revise plans accordingly. The school's goals are visited regularly and adjusted, when necessary. All decisions and modifications to plans are data led and made for the benefit of their students. This professional approach enables the school to move forward confidently. The school's clearly expressed vision is fully supported by the whole school community. Thorough monitoring procedures help the school to make positive progress towards the achievement of its vision of successfully meeting the needs of each of its students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: James McCune Smith (M200)	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 demanding, 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?				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?				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