



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Ralph R McKee Career and Technical High School

**High School 600
290 St Mark's Place
Staten Island
NY 10301**

Principal: Sharon A Henry

Dates of review: January 7 – 9, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Anne Evanoff

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Ralph R McKee Career and Technical High School is a high school with 755 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 39% Black, 30% Hispanic, 28% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 30% special education students. Boys account for 64% and girls account for 36%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 89.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 41% eligibility.

The principal was appointed to the school in September 2007. The school is located in the St George area of Staten Island and is the only career and technical educational institution in the borough. It is a non-zoned public school that attracts students from all boroughs.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has established a clear vision for school improvement and is leading the school towards greater success for more students.
- The principal, assistant principals, and staff gather and use data effectively to inform instruction and improve student learning.
- The principal empowers teachers to become leaders in sharing best practices and collaboratively planning for student success.
- The administrative team provides effective instructional leadership and support to both new and seasoned teachers to enhance teaching and learning.
- The principal and cabinet have developed whole school goals that address the needs of the school and they share them with all stakeholders.
- Administration and staff have high expectations for student success and respond immediately when students experience difficulty.
- The school provides a broad and compelling curriculum to extend learning both within and outside the regular school day.
- Parents and students respect and trust school personnel and support the vision of the school.
- The administrative team has developed procedures that allow the school to operate effectively; as a result, students are well behaved and well supported.
- The school has established partnerships with a variety of outside agencies and organizations to enrich and enhance student growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Engage students more consistently in setting specific academic goals and develop individual plans to achieve those goals.
- Provide parents with information about the goals set for each student and also how to support their children to improve.
- Continue to develop a school wide focus on the differentiation of instruction to improve teaching practices and learning outcomes.

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.

Students feel privileged to attend a school that offers so many different pathways to success. They feel highly supported by the entire staff. As a result, students are willing to work hard and “give it all they have” to graduate with high honors. Students note that “teachers here don’t teach just subjects; they teach you about real life and what you need to do to succeed”. They are enthusiastic about their courses and feel inspired by the high expectations of the school and the challenge “to be better than their best”. The new principal is highly visible in the school and is dedicated to a philosophy of “servant leadership” in developing a professional learning community that meets the best interests of the students. This school is on a mission with a clear understanding of its purpose and a strategic plan to accomplish it.

Issues from the previous Quality Review have been addressed successfully. The administration fosters a climate of life-long learning and has empowered teachers to share the lead in improving instructional practices. To this end, the school has organized a schedule for common planning time and regular classroom inter-visitations. Some progress has been made with regard to the use of data in setting individual learning goals and in planning differentiated learning activities but this is not yet consistent practice across the school. Staff work hard to keep parents in the “learning loop” and increase their involvement. All recognize that there is more work to do in this area especially in the area of helping students at home to achieve their goals. The inquiry team is well under way in identifying a group of students for whom individual goals will be set and progress towards those goals measured at regular intervals.

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 places a high priority on getting to know the strengths and weakness of every student in the school. Although the principal has been there for a short time, she already knows many students on a first name basis and is highly involved in what they are doing and the choices they are making. This focus on “knowing our students” is also seen in the rigorous way in which the school gathers data on student achievement. Through a range of standardized tests and classroom assessments, the school develops an accurate database in all subjects for each student. The administrative team, guidance department and teachers carefully analyze student data and flag students that are not meeting

graduation requirements. Teachers effectively use a “grade keeper” program to track student progress and take immediate action when students fall behind. Such a tool provides a ready source of data to quickly identify students who require additional support in getting them back on track.

The school also rigorously uses its data to identify the needs of its English language learners and special education students and provide mainstream support. The school effectively makes comparisons of its data by past performance, various subgroups and by similar schools in order to address achievement gaps. For example, the staff provides Advanced Placement courses for those students who require greater challenge and have developed course options related to gender preferences. They have also successfully modified courses, based on the data, to meet the needs of struggling students to ensure greater student success. Teachers are highly involved in tracking student progress and involve a variety of support structures within the school for students falling behind. The staff has received considerable professional development in using data from ARIS to track student achievement and use the data to plan instruction more effectively.

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.

The school makes good use of data in setting measurable goals and planning for improvement. The principal and cabinet carefully analyze the data and focus on each student, classroom, grade, and academic subject to identify trends and patterns. This high level of scrutiny enables the school to identify those students who are having difficulty or who are in jeopardy of not graduating. As a result, teachers are able to target individuals or groups of students for improvement. Although some students are involved in setting specific goals and planning next steps with teachers for improvement, this practice is not sufficiently embedded in every class.

Data analysis also provides a clear focus in terms of setting goals that drive school decision making. Common preparation time allows staff to collaborate in this process and contribute effectively to school development plans. High expectations are communicated through collaborative planning meetings and serve to reinforce teachers’ expectations of themselves and of their students.

The principal is building positive relationships with staff, students and parents through her high visibility and accessibility. Students recognize that the principal, assistant principals and staff want them to aim high and to strive to be the best they can. To this end, the school is diligent in its efforts to involve parents in their children’s education. Regular conferences, the school website, newsletters, and regularly progress reports provide a good source of information for parents on how well their children are performing. However, not all parents receive information about the goals set for improvement or how to help their children at home.

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 principal and cabinet engage in strategic planning based on the data to make informed decisions that support school goals. For example, one goal is to increase the percentage of students who graduate to 80%. As a result, the school has planned ongoing professional development to increase the range of teachers' instructional strategies to engage students more effectively in their learning. The school is working towards increased differentiation of instruction through the more effective use of these strategies. It is also enhancing its arts program. The school is highly successful in improving achievement in English language arts because of the skillful way in which the arts are incorporated into the different subject areas.

Adjustments to other courses in the light of this performance data are also having a positive impact on achievement. Since one of the school's goals is to empower teachers to take the lead for sharing best practices, subject teachers are piloting various instructional strategies in their classrooms. They also demonstrate these strategies at workshops and faculty meetings and initiate discussion about their use at subject meetings. The development of pacing calendars and curriculum maps for each course of study has created another significant focal point for collaborative planning and for tracking the achievement of subject goals. In some classrooms, teachers challenge students effectively by probing their thinking and asking higher-level questions. These strategies motivate students to "go deeper" in their understanding. However, there is some inconsistency in the way in which teachers use data to differentiate lessons to accommodate the specific learning needs of individual students.

There is a high degree of mutual trust and respect among all stakeholders. As a result, all stakeholders openly share information to ensure greater success for all students. Attendance is high because students understand how important it is to do their best and they sense how much their teachers care.

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 has developed a "blueprint for instructional leadership" which invites all staff members to become leaders and actively participate in creating the vision of the school. Administrators regularly visit classrooms and provide feedback to teachers that focus on what students are doing and learning at "a given moment". The principal's focus is to raise staff awareness of how instruction can be targeted to align with specific student learning needs. For example, in the first marking period, one class had not achieved their progress targets. As a result, a monitoring process was developed for that class to ensure student learning improved during the next two marking periods. Teachers participated in professional development on how to use pacing calendars effectively to plan with more purpose and to ensure student growth.

Frequent meetings enable staff to develop their skills in assessment and in using such information effectively. Regular classroom visitations focus on particular strategies and provide a basis for discussion and feedback at department meetings. These opportunities have increased teacher accountability for identifying their own professional development. There is considerable excitement and support among the staff for such collaboration and this is reinforced by the positive results in student results.

The principal and assistant principals are well respected by the staff, students and parents. The school operates well and runs smoothly because there is a clear vision for the future and procedures and expectations are fair and reasonable. Since there is a dedicated effort throughout the school to ensure that “no students fall through the cracks”, support personnel such as guidance counselors, social worker and assistant principals are actively engaged in tracking students and developing action plans to ensure student success. The school’s motto, “Learning is key at McKee” is reflected in the variety of support mechanisms that are provided for students, including McKee After Three, Saturday Academy, Tutoring, and Peer Mediation. Partnerships with organizations such as BMW, Construction 2000, and FIRST Robotics enhance student growth and development while creating career opportunities for a large number of students.

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.

The principal and assistant principals demonstrate a powerful vision for school improvement. They understand the importance of ongoing and continuous assessment and this is a particularly effective aspect of their work. The assistant principals in each of the core subject areas monitor student performance on a weekly basis and hold teachers accountable for making immediate adjustments. Teachers receive good information about what they need to do to become even more skillful and considerable support is provided to support their growth. The school uses data well to set achievement targets for students and to measure their success. For example, each teacher has a three-year trend chart for each subject from the Regents’ Exams to better track the effects of their instructional practices.

The improvement planning process enables the school to monitor progress towards strategic goals and review intervention options. The school has developed its own periodic assessments to ensure that they have some measures in place to review interim goals and reset the bar if necessary. Teachers review their curriculum maps closely to monitor learning goals and provide students with an integrated approach to literacy learning.

The school has effectively used the Comprehensive Education Plan to prioritize teaching and learning goals in order to better refine their action plans and make a greater impact on student achievement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Ralph R. McKee Career and Technical High School (R600)	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