



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Steven D. McSweeney School

**Middle-High School 721
2697 Westchester Avenue
Bronx
NY 10461**

Principal: Jean Marie Chin

Dates of review: May 12 - 13, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Louise Kapner

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Steven D. McSweeney School is an occupational training center with 461 students from ages 14 to 21. The school population comprises 39% Black, 54% Hispanic, 4% White and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 63% of the students enrolled and girls account for 37%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 80.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 100% eligibility.

Steven D. McSweeney is one of five occupational training centers in New York. It is a 12-month school for students with emotional deficits, developmental delays, visual impairments and those within the autistic spectrum. There are 37 classes in three sites, nine part-time work sites, and 11 full-time work-study programs. Students attend in non-graded self-contained settings or inclusion classes, and are integrated into mainstream classes with the support of paraprofessionals. The vast majority of students are eligible for the New York State Alternate Assessment.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and administrative staff are highly committed to creating a supportive environment where all students are successful.
- The school uses a wide range of assessments to identify students' needs.
- Professional development is differentiated and used well to enhance the skills of all staff members.
- Parents are very knowledgeable of programs and unanimous in recognizing the school as a safe and caring environment with high expectations.
- The instructional programs are engaging and well matched to students' needs.
- Highly effective partnerships and competitive grant awards provide many opportunities that enhance the school's programs.
- Staff are very committed and work in a highly collaborative manner to meet the behavioral, academic and social needs of fragile students.
- The school is highly self-reflective and continually looks to revise practices to provide relevant instruction.
- Students are happy, enjoy coming to school and know what is expected of them.
- Student support service providers are an integral part of the school program.

What the school needs to improve

- Disaggregate data by student subgroups to compare student performance and progress.
- Develop a uniform format for daily data collection to enable teachers to monitor effectively student performance and progress.

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.

Steven D. McSweeney is a very well managed school for students with a wide range of special needs. The principal and the assistant principals bring many years of special education experience to their positions, thus enabling them to have a keen understanding of the needs of fragile students. They, along with the dedicated staff, work in a highly collaborative manner to provide engaging, suitable instruction to improve students' outcomes. Parents and students expressed their appreciation for a safe, caring environment with high expectations. Staff use a wide range of assessments to gather data relative to each student's needs. Teachers record the information and use it very effectively to monitor students' performance and progress, to guide instruction, and to set interim and long-term goals which are included in individual education plans. However, the school does not use a uniform data collection system to ensure consistency of recorded information for each program or activity. Currently, the school does not disaggregate the data by gender or by ethnic groups. Staff are very knowledgeable about best practices and participate in many professional development activities to hone their skills to ensure good teaching. The school's effective partnerships and winning of competitive grants provide excellent resources to enhance the instructional program. Additionally, the dedication of the student support providers helps ensure that each student receives suitable help to maximize his or her potential. Each area noted in the previous year's Quality Review has been addressed effectively. The development and initiation of a school-designed vocational assessment rubric effectively identifies student's needs and guides instruction supporting the school's program for students to gain employment upon graduation. The work of the inquiry team is well underway. Progress of targeted students in the autistic program is carefully monitored as an outgrowth of the use of the "Picture Exchange Communication System". The school is using the results of this study to enhance instruction for other students. Administrators are not complacent, school practice is under constant review, and suitable changes are promptly initiated to improve student outcomes.

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 uses a wide range of available and school-generated assessments well to determine the functional level and behavioral and social needs specific to each student.

It periodically administers assessments and reviews authentic student work to monitor performance and progress. Staff know their students very well and maintain their collected data in various formats, such as task analysis charts, or "Quick Publish" to guide instruction and to set interim and long-term goals. All teachers maintain a principal's student datafolio with relevant student information such as the individual education plan and updated goal sheets. However, the school does not use a uniform system to ensure consistency of recorded information of daily work. The school-wide information system and on-line occurrence reports provide the school with data that is successfully used to monitor student behavior relative to whom, when, where and type of occurrences and to develop individualized suitable functional behavior plans that address and help modify student behavior. The school very effectively uses a self-designed vocational assessment rubric to identify each student's instructional needs in the area of employment skills and, consequently, identified the need for travel training for all students. However, the school does not disaggregate its information by gender or ethnic groups to identify any specific groups that need additional or different support. Comparisons of student performance by class and grade and with other schools are difficult given the school's unique program. However, the principal reviews her school's outcomes year-to-year relative to the number of students involved in work-study programs and students entering college upon graduating from the inclusion program. This year there is a 10% increase in student participation in transitional work-study programs and in each of the prior two years a couple of students have successfully entered college. The principal compares her school to other schools to the extent possible. She uses District cohort and leadership academy meetings to focus in on best practices.

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 entire school community is highly focused on improving student achievement. The school has regularly scheduled faculty conferences and ongoing intra-site and inter-site meetings to keep staff informed of school programs and goals. The principal designed a "Vocational Core of Knowledge" that is shared with all staff to clearly define the school's continuum of services. Staff work in a highly collaborative manner and view their weekly cohort meetings by discipline as "very powerful" enabling them to plan effectively to improve student outcomes. Administrators, specialists and teachers effectively use student information to develop and refine instructional strategies. Service providers provide suitable push-in services supporting students' educational needs. The work of the inquiry team provides excellent guidance to assist in the development of communication skills for students in the autistic program. Through the introduction of the "Picture Exchange Communication System", targeted students are showing growth academically and behaviorally. The school plans to expand the use of this practice to other students throughout the school to improve achievement. The school is passionate about providing students with the tools to become independent adults. Students are very proud of their accomplishments and know what is expected of them during their time in the main site and at work-study programs. Parents are highly knowledgeable about the school and extremely appreciative of safe and caring environment and the opportunities provided to their child. They regularly receive information about their child's progress and attend workshops and individual conferences to learn how to

support their child at home. One parent was able to share information about her child's behavior with the doctor resulting in a positive modification to medication. Parents are highly encouraged to share relevant information about their child with the school during in-take meetings and ongoing during individual education planning conferences.

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

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

The school's instructional program includes grade and student specific project-based learning aligned to State standards. Teachers are held highly accountable that classrooms provide suitable lessons in a nurturing environment to support learning and personal growth. Administrators visit classrooms and look at authentic student work as evidence of good teaching. Staff know each student by name and are very sensitive to the needs of each individual enabling them to respond appropriately to crisis. The school uses pacing calendars in all content areas and this year designed and introduced pacing specific to the autistic program to ensure that students receive relevant instruction. Information culled from ongoing assessments provides staff with meaningful data to guide instruction. Students are actively engaged in learning that is suitable to their needs. Computer-based instruction enables students to learn and proceed at their own pace. Non-communicative students are able to use touch-screen technology to respond to questions. Work-study programs actively engage students in tasks that build competencies that they can eventually use to get a job. Students receive every opportunity to reach their potential. Higher-achieving students attend the Career/Technical High School to earn a skill-specific certificate so they can gain full-time employment upon graduation. Students also have many opportunities to engage in meaningful enrichment activities. A sewing project enabled students to make and model their own creations. Beautiful murals, painted by the students under the direction of the art teacher, adorn the walls of the Gleeb Center, one the school's work sites. The increase of attendance by 3% this year is a testament to interventions put in place and the importance that the school places on students' regularly attending, thus leading to their success. Decisions for the use of resources are well thought out and in line with the school's goals. Administrators have clearly defined roles and make sure the school runs smoothly. They monitor instruction and work-study at all sites to ensure that students' needs are met. The purchase and introduction of the Eden curriculum for the autistic program came after a careful review and is being monitored for its successful implementation. Teachers appreciate having input into this process.

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 administrative team is highly effective and promotes a nurturing, caring environment. They use formal observations and learning walks to ensure good teaching is aligned with students' individual education plans. Administrators review student work displayed on bulletin boards as evidence of good instructional practices. Written

summaries and a bulletin board rubric enable teachers to receive feedback that they view as “really helpful.” Professional development activities are extensive. Over 160 offerings enable teachers and paraprofessionals to participate in District and site-based activities to enhance their skills. Staff appreciate the opportunity to visit colleagues’ classrooms and work collaboratively to share best practices. The coach team-teaches to help classroom teachers hone their craft. The school has hired about 24 “teaching fellows” over the past few years. They are provided with a high level of support and “never feel like an outsider.” The school does a very good job of matching teacher to the needs of students and may reassign staff to maximize teachers’ strengths. Student behavior is a high priority and the school’s “Keep it REAL” program establishes clear rules of behavior. A safety squad enables students to role model good behavior for others. Student support service providers are integral members of the staff. Counseling services give students emotional help in school and appropriate referrals to outside sources provides excellent guidance relative to transitional services, social services and medical help. The transitional coach and job developer work in a highly collaborative manner to effectively place students in employment. Highly effective partnerships and competitive grant awards are well integrated. As a result of a large grant, the school is collaborating with the State office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) to develop a “Model Transition Program” to prepare students for success in the work place.

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 school is highly focused on improving student outcomes. Each student’s individual education plan and interim progress reports include short-term and long-term goals. Students’ results on assessments and authentic work provide information relative to their progress towards achievement. Administrators review student report cards to monitor the impact of instruction and participate in weekly cohort meetings to measure teachers’ progress towards meeting instructional goals. As a result, of the ongoing review, suitable revisions can be promptly implemented. To support the school’s goal of preparing students for employment, the school administered a vocational rubric to assess each student’s skills. The school identified travel training as an overarching area of need. Through a second assessment, comparative results were obtained. The school now plans to use the rubric four times each school year to monitor students’ progress. The school is also highly self-reflective and continually looks at student outcomes to assess the effectiveness of its programs. As a result of looking at the use of instructional time, the school initiated a book club at the end of the day so students are engaged in conversations and continually engaged in learning activities until they leave. The principal is very proud of the work she has accomplished since taking over the leadership of the school two years ago. She continues to be highly focused on improving student outcomes and increasing employment opportunities and sees the initiatives and use of data to guide instruction as a “work in progress”.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Stephen D. McSweeney	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