

# **Quality Review Report 2008-2009**

**The William McKinley School**

**Elementary School 63**

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

**Principal: Darlene Despeignes**

**Dates of review: March 10 - 11, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: Sara Carvajal**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The William McKinley School is an elementary school with 202 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 20% Black, 62% Hispanic, 8% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 90.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 64% eligibility.

### Overall Evaluation

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

The William McKinley School is a closely-knit community, led by a passionate administrator who strives relentlessly to implement a unified vision for increased school-wide student achievement. Teachers openly admit that they share the same values as their leader. They wholly embrace the principal's weekly data team meetings as quality time during which they may discuss student progress as indicated by rigorous data analysis. Teachers value the fact that the over-arching goal of the meetings is to focus on the whole child and move the school-wide agenda of "progress for all". Parent leaders appreciate and whole-heartedly support the dedicated principal and committed teachers and the many ways by which school the school communicates information with them. Students view the school as a great place to learn because of its increasingly safe environment and the level of intimacy they have with their teachers because of the significantly low class sizes.

The spirit of collaboration is the driving force that underpins the assorted layers of focused, data-driven planning and communication between the school and families. As a result, focused action research has expanded within the school community to include math this year. Similarly, parent leaders have become increasingly involved in molding and communicating the school's high expectations, while questioning instructional initiatives that may initially seem irrelevant to their children's needs. Most significantly, the principal and faculty have joined forces to develop and implement an in-house conflict resolution curriculum that has resulted in a positive shift in climate throughout the site.

The leadership has developed an impressive momentum for continued school improvement. All school constituents have an opportunity to build collaboratively upon the current year's successes. However, at this time, the school does not delve deeply enough in its use of rubrics as a valuable data source to help teachers set and monitor individual, interim student goals in all subjects. This limits the consistency with which teachers are able to involve students in setting their individual goals. Students do not review progress through reflection at clearly defined checkpoints throughout the year. Consequently, other than in reading and writing, they lack confidence and are unable to articulate their specific goals. Similarly, the school has no systematic structure to define clear learning goals for teachers and provide interim checkpoints to measure instructional improvement and its impact on student achievement. Teachers do not make best use of data to generate enrichment instruction for higher achieving students.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and staff share a clear vision of developing a safe, data-driven learning community that promotes student achievement through on-going collaboration with all stakeholders.
- Strategic organizational and instructional decisions enhance the school climate and culture to substantiate student and teacher learning.
- The strategic decision to provide small classes throughout the school supports teachers in analyzing student data, setting individual student goals, and differentiating instruction.
- The principal and staff are effective in communicating school-wide high expectations with parents through various means in order to gain the support of families in continuing school improvement.
- Classrooms nurture increased content knowledge and vocabulary development for all student subgroups through the effective use of a variety of instructional resources that promote academic independence.
- The principal has solidly implemented the periodic collection of hard and soft data in the areas of English language arts, math and science to support teachers in analyzing learning outcomes for individuals and groups of students.

### What the school needs to improve

- Extend the setting of individual learning goals with students and their families to include focused next steps in science and social studies to raise achievement further.
- Deepen teacher use of data in planning for effective differentiation of instruction to enrich the learning of higher achieving students.
- Use multiple data sources to formalize interim professional development goals in collaboration with teachers and monitor the impact on their practice.
- Expand the use of rubrics across curriculum areas to ensure consistency and broaden the support to students when setting and monitoring specific, individualized interim learning goals.

## Part 3: Main Findings

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

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The principal is a data-driven visionary. She has streamlined the periodic collection and analysis of hard and soft data strategically to ensure it has a positive impact on student achievement across all curriculum areas this year. To this end, a balance of running records, on-demand writing pieces and unit assessments in the content areas comprise the primary formative assessment tools that measure the pulse of student achievement at the site.

The principal engages teachers in on-going dialogue about data during one-on-one meetings each week. This quality time with the principal provides an opportunity for her to delve deeply with teachers into the progress or outstanding deficiencies of individual and groups of students. In addition, the principal is able to discuss individual practice with teachers as it relates to school-wide goals and high expectations. The principal and teachers agree that the weekly data meetings have made teachers more reflective in their practice. This has resulted in improved guided reading instruction that has led to a great momentum in moving students through reading levels. Similarly, these one-on-one sessions have helped fine-tune teacher practices in other curriculum areas. This has resulted in increased student stamina and independence in writing as well as significant positive outcomes in end-of-unit assessments.

Students also possess great ownership of their formative data, particularly in English language arts and math, although it varies in format from class to class. Regardless of whether student data is contained in folders, notebooks or elaborate portfolios, it is clear that the great majority of students know what they are succeeding at and where the shortcomings of their learning still lie. Similarly, periodic in-house progress reports as well as ongoing less formal communication with parents maintain families abreast of student progress in these subject areas.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

Layers of goal-setting practice are occurring successfully across the school. Beginning with the school leadership team, ongoing monthly sessions have provided key opportunities in which the principal has collaborated with a core group of teachers and parents to develop the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan. Similarly, the school's data inquiry teams have met regularly and consistently throughout the year. They have identified the root of deficiency in the school and developed strategic work plans, which aim to raise the levels of achievement in English language arts and math

significantly. The school has identified and replicated precise data monitoring and successful instructional practices in all classrooms in order to drive an increase in student progress.

Staff set student-learning goals in English language arts, math and science. In some classrooms, teachers organize and post student goals publicly either in prominently displayed pocket charts or portfolios. The goals for reading and rubric-driven writing are very specific and it is clear that students have been involved in setting them, as they demonstrate their deep thinking about next steps. However, in the areas of math, social studies and science, students lack confidence in stating their goals with the same precision and understanding of the impact on their overall achievement. The students' lack of ownership is reflection of the inconsistent use of rubrics to support the collaborative development and understanding of measurable interim goals in these subjects.

The school consistently informs parents of its high expectations through various means. The principal meets with parents during monthly parent-teacher association (PTA) meetings to discuss summative data and its influence on school-wide planning and future student achievement. Additionally, the principal issues an academic newsletter to parents each month to complement the school's automated messenger system and periodic student progress reports. Together, these procedures help maintain parents' knowledge and understanding of the school overall as well as the growth of their own child.

**Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The principal and teachers throughout the site agree that the school is "the hidden gem of the lower east side". To this end, the workshop model is the standard method for school-wide implementation of the highly structured city-mandated core curricula in English language arts and math. Inquiry-driven, project-based units drive highly engaging instruction in science and social studies. The school has commissioned Teacher's College to facilitate the proper implementation of balanced literacy units of study for reading and writing. Everyday Math constitutes the focused math curriculum. To offset the use of prescribed curricula, the principal has empowered a cross-section of teachers to organize a series of grade-specific, user-friendly curriculum maps. These align directly with state and city standards and provide teachers with genuine ownership of the curriculum.

An intense analysis of summative data has empowered the principal to make tactical instructional decisions that enhance the collaborative school culture and support deepened student learning. In particular, the school has reduced class size significantly to support teachers in the successful differentiation of instruction so that it fine-tunes the critical thinking skills of students and increases reading comprehension. Effective collaboration with teachers resulted in the development of a customized school-wide conflict resolution program to provide students and teachers with stress management and coping techniques. This has significantly reduced the frequency and severity of student conflicts and concerns, which interfered with learning.

The differentiation of instruction to provide academic intervention in English language arts and math is consistent throughout the school. The most commonly used effective

technique in tailored instruction is the teacher-directed, strategy lessons for small groups. However, teachers do not make sufficient use of data in the planning of differentiated lessons that enrich higher achieving students and maximize their progress.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

Teachers greatly appreciate the way that the principal demonstrates respect for their on-going professional growth by providing them with the resources and opportunities necessary for focused, data-driven instruction. The principal and teachers collaborate to determine plans for continued professional growth using data derived from informal observations, walkthrough letters and conference notes from individual meetings. In addition, the school has established a professional development resource center adjacent to the general office. This space, filled with a wide array of instructional resources and planning templates, has evolved into the hub for strategic, collaborative teacher planning. On another level, professional collaborations have directly stemmed from the expansion of data inquiry work into two teams. The inclusion of more classroom teachers in the school's action research work is resulting in the increased sharing of targeted data and best practices between colleagues.

In the absence of in-house coaches, the principal has employed other key structures to nurture the craft of teaching, such as reflective in-house intervisitation to lab-site classrooms and focused workshops beyond the regular school day. Additionally, the principal has enlisted strategic use of district level and school-support organization consultants to provide on-going staff development

Outside the academic realm, teachers concur that the recent organizational decision to give teachers intensive training in behavior management, using District 75's STOPP consultants, has made a remarkable difference in the overall school culture. Following the collaboration with District 75, a team of faculty members engaged in a focused study group. The group is rigorous in analyzing the causes of disruptive conduct and methodology by which to modify the unacceptable behavior. Consequently, the school has initiated its own school-wide conflict resolution campaign. This has considerably improved the overall school climate, which was formerly beset by occasional aggressive behavior among students.

Despite its strides in providing meaningful support to staff and students, the administration has not established a formal differentiated professional development plan for teachers based upon their systematic, interim monitoring.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 principal and staff share a clear vision for continued school improvement. The vision focuses on supporting and enabling both struggling and high-achieving students to demonstrate significant academic achievement. This unified vision is articulated and revisited continuously during weekly, individual data meetings between the principal and

teachers, inquiry team meetings, school leadership team planning sessions and monthly PTA meetings. Similarly, the school community's understanding of the progress toward achieving this vision is evident in the authenticity of the school's self-evaluation form.

The principal and inquiry team members assess and monitor student progress in English language arts and math consistently across grades. Similarly, these instructional leaders model data gathering and analysis, and goal setting for small clusters of students. In this way, teachers learn to employ these essential practices during independent instructional planning for all core subject areas.

The school records investments in teacher development and student progress through copious conference notes and interim assessment data records. The principal scrutinizes these closely to identify where further work is required. However, the school does not yet utilize rubrics consistently as valuable data to set and monitor specific, individualized short-term goals at interim checkpoints throughout the year. Consequently, it does not fully support or inform students of the next steps in their learning in all core subjects.

# School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: The William McKinley School</b>	△	▷	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>				
	△	▷	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			<b>X</b>	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			<b>X</b>	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>				
	△	▷	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?		<b>X</b>		
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

## DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYO, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

**Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.**

To what extent do ...	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?		X		
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X	

**Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.**

To what extent do school leaders...	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?		X		
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X	
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X	
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X	

**Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X	
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?		X		
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X	
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed