

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Dr. Susan S. McKinney Secondary School of the Arts

Middle High School 265

**101 Park Street
Brooklyn
NY 11205**

Principal: Paula Holmes

Dates of review: February 3-4, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Nancy Gannon

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Dr. Susan S. McKinney Secondary School of the Arts is a secondary school with 509 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 73% Black, 22% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 39% of the students enrolled and girls account for 61%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 81.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Dr. Susan S. McKinney Secondary School of the Arts is a small secondary school that offers a personalized environment where every child is known and where students have opportunities to explore the arts in addition to their academic classes. Students and parents both speak of the intimate, familial atmosphere where they feel thoroughly supported by teachers who are fair even when they are “tough.” One student stated that a teacher “saved my life” by insisting that he was college material and pulling him through a period of disengagement, giving him multiple opportunities to succeed. A parent said that the teachers make sure every child succeeds, even when “they have to walk them through every step.” The high expectations held by teachers and school leaders have pushed students to achieve academically. Parents and students utilize TeacherEase to monitor academic progress and say that they receive phone calls and emails regularly. Although teachers look at data around every student and focus on a small target population, they do not yet set measurable goals for that population or look at any of the other subgroups of students. However, in their work with the identified target population, they use student work and other data to find strategies to ensure that individual students succeed.

School leaders partner with faculty to provide differentiated, teacher-led staff development that aligns with school goals, with a heavy focus on better writing skills across the grades. In addition, teacher teams meet and work to develop instructional solutions to support struggling students. Results are visible in many classrooms around the school, where teachers provide instruction that is rigorous and differentiated, and the school is working to make the results visible in all classrooms. As part of a professional development plan, leaders have evaluated every teacher and indicated the next learning steps for that teacher to ensure improvement across the faculty. In addition, leaders meet regularly to discuss and evaluate the curriculum and instructional changes, although they have not yet set specific and measurable goals with benchmarks to mark progress that may result from those changes. Although the school has some strong curriculum aligned to State standards, they have not yet mapped the curriculum across the seven grades to ensure coherence between grades and departments. The school has not yet set up formalized systems for evaluating data collection and analysis throughout the school to ensure that teachers in department and grade teams are looking at the right data, and analyzing it in ways that will result in accelerated student progress.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The departmental inquiry teams use careful examination of data and student work to adjust classroom and school-wide practice, better supporting academic growth.
 - The school organizes all teachers into departmental teams that operate using an inquiry approach. In addition, some teachers also participate in a school-wide inquiry team that looks at achievement across departments. By consistently engaging all teachers in this work, the school has improved academic supports for students, including more writing structures and better targeted social studies instruction.
 - In an animated discussion of one member of the team's target population, an English teacher shared a sample of student work that illuminated the student's understanding of his own academic strengths and weaknesses. The team went on to discuss how this sample connected with their own gleanings regarding this student, and concluded with a request to discuss implications for their practice in the next session. By closely analyzing student work, the school better understands how their students learn and how they can adjust their teaching to meet student needs.
- The school's warm, familial environment and intense support for young people leaves students feeling that "they care for us" and ensures that learning is challenging and exciting for students.
 - An English class exemplified a diverse group of students engaged in a rigorous learning environment so compelling that many lingered long after the bell for lunch had rung. Students wanted to further discuss a "nurture versus nature" argument, and clearly felt comfortable sharing theories and respectfully disagreeing with the friendly and supportive teacher. This classroom culture allowed students to explore ideas with each other and with the teacher in a safe space.
 - The school provides a wide variety of places for student voice, including a student government, literary magazine, newspaper, and multiple arts forums. In response, students say that teachers go beyond their academic roles to offer social and emotional support to students, opening their doors during lunch and after school. "It's like a big family here," one student said, and many others agreed. By providing a supportive environment, the school helps students move past inevitable adolescent tumult to focus on their learning.
- The school offers teachers focused, teacher-driven professional development aligned with school goals, which has helped develop practices to accelerate student learning and build adult capacity.
 - The school's shift to teacher-driven workshops, including a teacher-led National Council of Teachers of English presentation, has helped to build

leadership throughout the faculty. The ongoing support around a new writing tool has helped promote better school-wide writing practices throughout the student body.

- Teachers have high expectations for student achievement, which has meant that every student is pushed to succeed and when some fail, they are given a second chance, leading to stronger student outcomes.
 - In addition to the active school leadership team and parent association, the school gives families more opportunities to shape the school through Friends of McKinney, which supports the school by fund-raising and resource gathering. Each of these organizations plays a role in school allocation of resources toward priorities of the community. The commitment of families to become an integral part of the school ensures that parents are fully engaged in student learning.
 - Students say that teachers push them to their full potential. A student summed this up by saying that “at this school, they expect all kids to go to college.” Even class assignments are imbued with this expectation, for example, a math class had students calculating college housing costs and a Spanish class had students practicing future tense by writing paragraphs about their college plans. By consistently making it clear to students that they are “college material,” the faculty helps students push themselves academically.
- Departments meet regularly to analyze a wide variety of data in order to shape the curriculum and teacher practice to support strong student outcomes throughout the school.
 - The social studies department, through analysis of disaggregated Regents results, determined that students knew how to successfully define historic events, but could not always pick the correct multiple choice answer or effectively provide analysis of that same historic event. In addition, the department discovered that students who struggled in the Global History Regents also struggled in their other academic classes. In response, the department has changed their instruction to emphasize analysis skills, and has offered more opportunities to practice multiple-choice options in order to improve academic results.
 - In the middle school, math and English teachers have each analyzed summative and formative student data around every student to create a spreadsheet of strengths, challenges, and next steps for each student. Teachers use this tool to focus their instruction and accelerate student learning.
- The principal leads a strong and cohesive team that continually meets to review school progress and to strategize about next steps in order to increase student achievement.
 - A group of formal and informal leaders throughout the school, including the union chapter chair, analyzed data that led to a major change in the ninth grade to create “Power English” and “Power Math.” By realigning resources and developing new curriculum, they have provided struggling

students with extra support in two key subjects that has resulted in better student outcomes at the end of the first semester.

What the school needs to improve

- Create a clear system for tracking progress toward annual and interim school-wide and classroom goals, with key benchmarks along the way to ensure measurable gains in student outcomes.
 - Currently, the school leadership has clear goals and meets to discuss them regularly. However, there are no benchmarks toward achieving those goals and leaders do not track progress in measurable ways. Therefore, at any given time, there is no clear way to articulate how much progress has been made toward end goals to improve student outcomes.
 - Although teachers are working in teams to look at a target population, they have not set specific, measurable goals and therefore cannot specifically determine where they are in terms of progress toward better academic results.
- Set clear goals for subgroups within the student population so that those students are pushed to achieve at high levels.
 - Currently, middle school students have specific goals in English and math classes, but teachers have not analyzed data to identify other subgroups of concern in the school. This means that the school does not have targeted end goals to ensure that all students reach their greatest academic potential. Similarly, not all teachers set class or team goals that include improvements in pedagogical practice.
- Develop a uniform method for tracking progress toward goals within student subgroups to ensure that all students are making progress.
 - At this time, teachers have determined only one subgroup, consisting of students in the lowest third of the population. However, neither school leaders nor teams track the progress of that subgroup or any other subgroup within the school. Because subgroups are not tracked, the school cannot determine the academic success of those populations over the course of the year.
- Formalize systems for evaluating data review processes so that clear protocols are in place to enable school leaders to regularly monitor ongoing student achievement.
 - Although school leaders regularly look at data, there are no structures in place to ensure that data reviews happen strategically and systematically. For example, although the school is excited about the changes implemented in the ninth grade and the ninth grade teachers are looking at student data, school leaders have not set up a system to review what data is being collected and how it is being examined. By not regularly monitoring the practices for collecting data and assessing progress, the school cannot regularly adjust practices to meet specific student needs.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Dr. Susan S. McKinney School of the Arts	△	▷	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			X	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?		X					
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X			
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?				X			
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X				
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?		X					
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?		X					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed