

# **Quality Review Report 2010-2011**

**Dr. Ronald McNair**

**Elementary School K005**

**820 Hancock Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11233**

**Principal: Lena Gates**

**Dates of review: April 4-5, 2011  
Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline Grossman**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Dr. Ronald McNair is an elementary school with 439 students from pre-kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 83% Black, 13% Hispanic, 3% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 91.3%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Comprehensive analysis of school-wide data provides a clear understanding of the school's priorities and is the foundation of effective decisions.
  - The school's data room is the nerve center of the school. Updated in real time, it enables school leaders and staff to firmly track trends. The many charts, graphs, and professional resources are used to guide conversations and decision making. The result is a high level of transparency that promotes accountability.
  - The principal meets regularly with each teacher to discuss and track every student's progress on periodic assessments. This information is used with other data such as attendance and teacher observation, to help develop plans not only for students but for teachers as well. As a result, expectations for teachers with respect to student performance are very clear.
- Effective alignment of all kinds of resources actively supports the school's goals, keeping a focus on improving teacher practice to meet student needs.
  - Teachers have five common periods a week in which to plan and work together in teams. Cluster periods in art, music, and science are given to every student every year in two month cycles, daily. This enables the students to develop depth and benefit from each of these choices yearly, because teachers are planning units of study tied to the classroom work.
  - The principal runs an early morning program attended weekly by over 275 students in which she models for teachers an integrated approach to infusing the cultural arts in to pedagogical practice. In addition to providing students with a rich instructional experience, it has helped teachers to better understand project based learning and has enabled them to add meeting time to their week.
- The school's beliefs about students' capacity to engage intellectually and succeed academically make students enthusiastic about their learning.
  - One of the school's fundamental tenets is that intelligence is modifiable. To that end, the school utilizes various thinking maps developed by one of their partners as an anchor of their teaching. These tools, such as vocabulary taxonomies or bubble maps, help students think and make sense of new material and ideas. These tools promote unity in teaching across the school. Students at all levels have internalized them and access them independently to help them develop higher order thinking around a variety of concepts in all content areas.
- A positive tone and culture of aspiration are pervasive, resulting in a strong sense of efficacy about students' ability to succeed.
  - There is clear partnership between teachers and parents. An effective program run by a parent volunteer provides bedtime stories during the

day, for children who may not be read to at home, and a program of giving Ronald McNair Dollars to students who do the right thing, foster a sense of community. Parents indicate that every adult in the school feels responsible for every student in the school; in turn, students interviewed all expressed that they had a trusted adult to whom they could turn, and that the school had high expectations for them.

- A wide array of interesting partnerships enriches the community and provides students and teachers with opportunities to expand their horizons.
  - Partnerships with Caring Educators, National Urban Alliance, and Long Island University help teachers develop skills in supporting students both academically as well as socially and emotionally. Teachers communicate with each other regularly not only about their current students, but about students they know well from years past, to offer assistance to one another.
  - Many exciting programs for students offer opportunities for them to expand their horizons both during and outside of the school day. Programs to teach children sign language, or learn to take professional photos, or build a robot, for example, have helped raise attendance and excite students about learning. A highly effective collaboration with City College is a vertical program that has brought some depth to the science program.
- The school's beliefs about what students need in order to learn best guides classroom practice and enables school leaders to reflect on teaching using a common lens.
  - The school's fundamental belief that intelligence is modifiable is actively supported by most of the faculty and provides unity in teaching across the school. All teachers utilize various thinking maps developed by one of their partners as a centerpiece of their teaching. This common practice provides some coherency for students and is a clear expectation for classroom practice.
  - The principal has been swift and decisive in taking action where necessary to ensure equitable experiences for all students. Regular classroom visits are anchored in conversations about data that reflects student achievement on periodic assessment. Action plans to improve individual teacher performance are put in place where necessary. New teachers are paired with mentor teachers and express that they benefit from this support.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Continue to develop alignment of curricula across and between grade levels to ensure a seamless experience that is rigorous for every student.
  - Although the use of thinking maps provides a singular approach to developing thinking skills, different grades utilize varying approaches in literacy. Curriculum outlines reflect only a scope and sequence, and lack evidence related to assessment and desired outcomes. As a result of this,

there is limited discussion about key standards and an overemphasis on using programs to address student needs, rather than on developing rich, integrated curricula that is aligned vertically as well as horizontally.

- Higher achieving students are not being sufficiently challenged by the current curricular approaches. Frequently upon finishing assigned work, they lack a follow up task. Technology is largely absent from classrooms, both by teachers and students. As a result, there is a lack of deep engagement scattered throughout the day across classrooms.
- Deepen the work of collaborative teams to more fully integrate an inquiry approach that informs classroom practice and focuses on student outcomes.
  - Currently in its first year of full implementation, inquiry teams lack routines and protocols that foster everyone's active participation and lack robust agendas. Some teams have not honed in on instructional strategies to support specific students. As a result, this work has not yet really begun to strongly influence change in classroom practice or alignment of curriculum.
  - The school's strength in the collection of student level periodic assessment data has not yet fully permeated the teacher teams. Discussion as a whole is not focused on individual students. Student work is not at the center of conversations and there was limited analysis of the success of the attempted strategies with respect to student outcomes. There is limited evidence that this work is directly impacting student outcomes.
- Build on existing systems to provide feedback to students and parents that help them clearly understand strengths and next steps.
  - School leaders are guided by periodic assessment data as they modify school goals and plans. For example, recognizing a need to supplement the classroom experiences of students who are excelling, they began offering some math enrichment sessions. This has had the dual effect of supporting those students while also ratcheting up expectations for classroom teachers.
  - Student notebooks were largely lacking any feedback from teachers. Some folders in which teachers were expected to continually track student progress were not current. As a result some students are unable to invest deeply in the steps they need to take to continually grow.
- Deepen the use of classroom level formative assessments to ensure that teachers are using authentic data to inform differentiated instruction.
  - Some teachers are beginning to use formative tools such as conferencing or kid-watching to collect information and use it to target instruction. However, in some cases, conference notes or running records were vague, documented sporadically, and not analyzed sufficiently. As a result, in a number of classrooms, activities, content and products were the same for every student and some students' needs were not being met to a strong enough degree.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

|   |    |   |   |    |
|---|----|---|---|----|
| School name: Dr. Ronald McNair  | UD | D | P | WD |
| Overall QR Score  |    |   | X |    |
| <b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>                             |    |   |   |    |
| <i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>  | UD | D | P | WD |
| 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  |
| <b>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.</b>                 |    |   |   |    |
| <i>To what extent does the school ...</i>   | UD | D | P | WD |
| 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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?   |    | X |   |    |
| 2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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 |    |

| <b>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.</b>  |                       |          |                   |           |                   |           |                       |
|--|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| <i>To what extent does the school ...</i>  | <b>UD</b>             | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b>          | <b>WD</b> |                   |           |                       |
| 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?   |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| 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?   |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| 3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?   |                       | <b>X</b> |                   |           |                   |           |                       |
| 3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?  |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| <b>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.</b>                           |                       |          |                   |           |                   |           |                       |
| <i>To what extent does the school...</i>   | <b>UD</b>             | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b>          | <b>WD</b> |                   |           |                       |
| 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? |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| 4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?  |                       | <b>X</b> |                   |           |                   |           |                       |
| 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?        |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| 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?  |                       |          |                   | <b>X</b>  |                   |           |                       |
| <b>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.</b>                   |                       |          |                   |           |                   |           |                       |
| <i>To what extent does the school...</i>   | <b>UD</b>             | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b>          | <b>WD</b> |                   |           |                       |
| 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?  |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| 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?                               |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| 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?   |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| 5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?  |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| <b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>  |                       |          |                   |           |                   |           |                       |
| <b>UD</b>  | <b>Underdeveloped</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>Developing</b> | <b>P</b>  | <b>Proficient</b> | <b>WD</b> | <b>Well Developed</b> |